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ABSTRACT

Intended for junior or senior high school English teachers, articles and features in this journal issue focus on young adult literature and the adolescent audience. The first article, Kevin Major's "The Truth about My Fictitious Friends," describes the genesis of the author's fiction writing for the Newfoundland audience, and is followed by a biography and review of Major's books by Judith Bugniazet. The second article, "Professional Riches: The Textbooks are Here" by W. Geiger Ellis, discusses three books on literature by Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson, Robert E. Probst, and Arthea J. S. Reed. The fourth article, "World War II and Its Relevance to Today's Adolescents" by Kathleen Dale Colarusso, reviews four stories of the Nazi Holocaust and how they can show today's adolescents that everyone contributes to problems and solutions through action and inaction, while the fifth article, "Telling the Tale" by Wilbur C. Ward, discusses books dealing with the broader history of the Jews. In "The Young Adult Novel: Looking down the Road," John S. Simmons suggests that classic works of literature may be easier to defend in light of increasing censorship than young adult works, and in the seventh article, Christy Hammer discusses using "Rachel's Legacy" by Hila Coleman and other works to heighten awareness of sex roles. The next two articles are by Sue Ellen Bridgers; the first is her acceptance speech for the ALAN Award, and the second a discussion of her evolution as a writer. In the tenth article Anthony L. Manna and Sue Misheff interview Ms. Bridgers about her writing. The final article, "The South in Recent Young Adult Novels" by Robert C. Small, Jr., explores the various stereotyped images of the southern United States culture and how they are treated in young adult works. Other features in this issue include suggested young adult readings grouped for specific teaching purposes, and a report from the 1985 ALAN workshop. (HTH)

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The ALAN Review

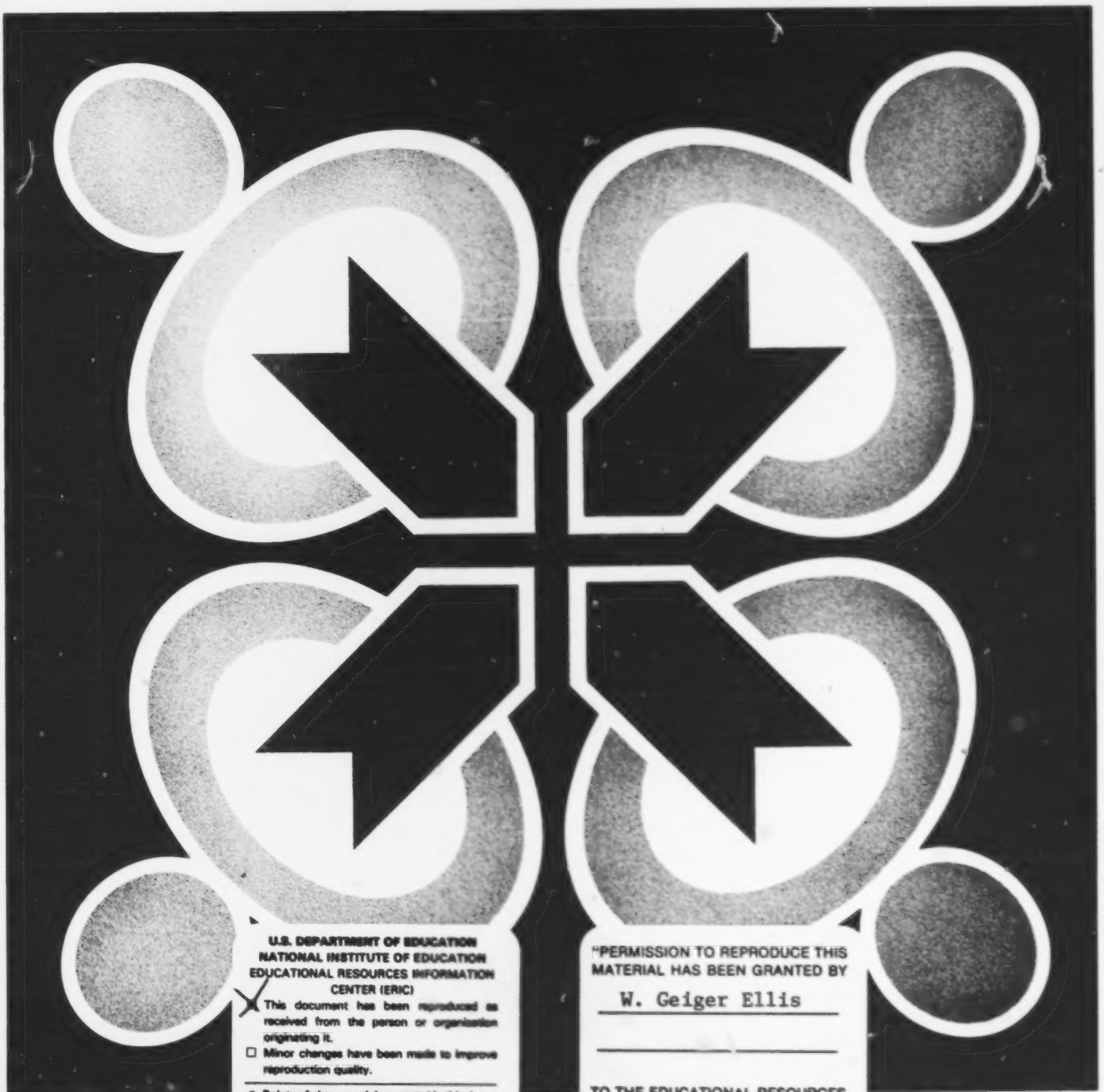
Assembly on Literature for Adolescents — National Council of Teachers of English

Vol. 13, No. 2 Winter 1986

ED265567

A Special Section

ALAN Award Recipient Sue Ellen Bridgers and Her Literature



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Articles should usually be no more than eight double-spaced typed pages and should be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope to which stamps are clipped. The author's name and affiliation should not appear on the manuscript. Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged promptly.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT MY FICTITIOUS FRIENDS

Kevin Major
Eastport, Newfoundland

I live on the island of Newfoundland. Perhaps a few of you have taken the ferry from Nova Scotia and traveled to the province. That is the way most Newfoundlanders encounter Americans – as tourists who are confounded by the high price of our gasoline and our 12% sales tax, yet awed by the rugged beauty of the island and the friendliness of its people.

I know Americans a little better than most of my countrymen. I grew up in a town that owes its existence to the establishment of a U.S. Air Force base on the island during World War II. My father owned a restaurant and often told stories of the GI's generosity, as well as stories of the fights that were commonplace between them and the local young men. (Young ladies were in short supply.)

The Yanks, as they were often called, weren't a bad lot. Far from it. My older sister almost married one. His name was Hank. (My mother wasn't so sure about that.) My aunt in fact did marry one. His name was Chuck. And so did the daughters of many of our neighbors – married them and flew away with them to such far-flung places as New Jersey and Arizona and Ohio.

I left my hometown for university in the same year the Americans closed their Air Force base. I went away to study pre-med, only to decide three years later (after six months of travel through the West Indies and Europe on a shoestring budget) that I'd rather try teaching and perhaps writing, although this latter choice I kept to myself.

I graduated from university in the early 70s, my head filled with the ideas of John Holt, Summerhill and the open classroom, to descend on a small Newfoundland outport community and face close to 40 grade seven students, whose reading abilities ran the gamut from near illiteracy to reading well above grade level.

It was there in that classroom the direction of my

writing consolidated – for I found that although I had managed to put together a fair collection of paperbacks (partly by writing publishers and requesting free examination copies), there were none which reflected the life of my students, that had characters who did many of the things they enjoyed, who talked to them about themselves. I decided to try to change that situation. My first attempt still lies packed away in my filing cabinet at home, having made the rounds of various publishers. But in 1978 *Hold Fast* was published – the start of a writing career that to date has concentrated on telling stories about young people.

I always make what to my mind is an important distinction – I write not for young people, but about young people. I do not feel my audience is limited to a particular age group, although I realize that the books have special appeal to teenagers because the main character in each is a teenager. As a serious writer I try to give it my best creative shot, bringing all the energy I have to the effort, just as I

would if the protagonists were adults. I despair of critics who feel such attention unworthy of the serious writer, just as I despair of writers who feel they must tone down their work for fear of criticism.

I write for the pleasure of knowing that I have created something that others may feel is of lasting worth to them, and that I may give cause for people to reflect upon some aspect of their lives or make them more understanding of the feelings and attitudes of others. And because of this it's the work I enjoy most and which I think I do best.

When asked how I begin a book, I invariably say it starts with a character – a person in my mind who I can see living out certain events in a book, a person whose life is, on the surface, ordinary, but, as is the life of each of us, unique and important. My books are the stories of ordinary young people in the grip of extraordinary circumstances.

A reviewer of that first book, *Hold Fast*, pondered aloud in the Toronto newspaper, **The Globe and Mail**, if Michael, the main character, was "a fit subject for fiction," terming him an "unteachable brute." (Not a quote you will find on any of my dust jackets.) That to me suggested (other than the distinct possibility that he had not read the whole book) that he had a rather snobbish attitude towards young people and perhaps people in general. My books are not really for the adult reader who likes his teenagers mild mannered and in the background. Those I choose to write about are front and center, with all their moodiness, ill-temper, fondness for loud music, as well as their thoughtfulness, freshness of vision, their charm. They are like all of us adults – human, but without our storehouse of experience.

That same reviewer confessed to being the "terrified" father of four. I could see why. Very few young people terrify me, in fact I sometimes feel more comfortable in their company than I do in the company of adults. I'm not entirely sure why this is so. But it has led me over the years into a career of teaching and writing novels about them.

I have come to realize that my own growing up is probably partly responsible for this. I grew up the youngest of seven children with a gap of seven years between myself and the next youngest. My parents were the age of most of my friend's grandparents. In fact I have a niece just one month younger than I. My adolescent years were not particularly enjoyable. It was a confusing time for a boy who didn't seem to fit in and (ironically now) was often uncomfortable with his peers. It was only after I left home and left the conformist atmosphere of my high school to go away at 17 to university, that I began to loosen my shell and enjoy myself more.

After several years of teaching, I decided to make a concentrated effort to write. I found myself drawn to young people I knew and had taught to provide guidelines for the characters in a novel.

My novels have been called regional. The characters all speak to us from the small Newfoundland community of Marten. Occasionally they use words that are to be found only in *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*. Some of them eat more fish and moose and rabbit than the average North American. But what concerns them in the end are the same things that concern young people everywhere – their family, friends, school, future, etc. The letters I get from young people tell me there are characters much like the ones I've created to be found in places as far from Newfoundland as Pequot Lakes, Minnesota and Roanoke, Virginia. Mine are not regional characters any more than Huck Finn and his friends, or the young people found in the novels of Sue Ellen Bridgers.

Michael, the protagonist of *Hold Fast*, is 14. A stubborn, independent youth, he spends much of the book in conflict – with those with whom he has gone to live after having lost his parents, with school officials, with peers and with his own conscience.

In some ways Michael is much like one particular person I knew at the time of writing the book. Although that young fellow did not have to face the tragedy that Michael did, I think he would have reacted in much the same way. Like Michael, he was very much his own person, a lover of the outdoors and the rural way of life in Newfoundland. He owned a skidoo; he snared rabbits; he questioned authority. He took pride in his independence. I admired him because he reacted fiercely against the then common attitude among a certain segment of the urban population on the island – that to come from a small fishing community was something to be ashamed of.

Michael has grown up in a family where he has

been allowed to speak his mind. Curtis, his cousin, whose family Michael has gone to live with, has not. *Hold Fast* contrasts the experience of these boys and comes out on the side of Michael.

The book points out the need of young people to be treated as individuals. They hate blanket descriptions of their age group. They feel that they are too often portrayed as troublemakers, considered guilty before the facts are clear. As with any age group, there is a great variety of personalities. No person wants to bear an unearned label; teenagers only want the same courtesy that adults extend to each other – to be judged on the basis of personal contact.

Michael in *Hold Fast* has other concerns. Being a 14-year-old male, he has started to take a greater interest in 14-year-old females. One in particular – Brenda.

Michael is confused, scared, but excited enough to plunge headlong into the relationship. Like many young people his age, he is trying to balance the messages about sex that he is getting from his parents, his teachers and his religion, with that from his peers, from TV, from commercials, movies, music and that from his own body.

If he is indeed like most people his age, he is uncomfortable talking to his parents about his feelings and wary of mentioning it to his peers for fear of being thought naive. At home, he may get the feelings that teenage sex is something that is frowned upon, but when he leaves the house to go to a movie he quickly sees it is something that is relished. Indeed, movie after teenage movie revolves around teenagers losing their virginity. And rare is the movie that treats the topic with sensitivity.

Michael needs the reassurance that others his age are just as confused. Perhaps he needs to have read a book like *Hold Fast*.

Or, as he gets older, *Far From Shore*.

Chris, the main character in *Far From Shore* is 15, almost 16. His carefree nature and irreverent humor is typical of a number of young fellows I have taught over the years (and alas, who now disrupt the classes in which I substitute teach), some of whom I got to know on a more personal level after I gave up teaching full-time. They provided me with a basis for Chris' character. The desperate nature of the economy in parts of Newfoundland provided me with a basis for the plot.

Like a lot of people in Newfoundland and indeed many parts of North America, Chris's life has been affected by unemployment. Chris's father, as the novel opens, is out of work and before long he leaves the province by himself to look for work elsewhere. It is not a healthy situation for any family, but one I have seen repeated again and again. This fall, with a very poor fishing season behind them, the concern of many men where I live is not having to draw unemployment benefits, but having to go on welfare because they do not qualify for such benefits.

One of my reasons for writing *Far From Shore* was to show the damage this unstable employment climate can do to families. I was interested, as well, in contrasting the traditional way of life in Newfoundland with the modern. I have been in the kitchens of many homes (my own included) where young people have been chided for wanting too much and for not appreciating the comforts of their everyday existence. The contrast between the style of living 25 years ago and that of today is sharper in Newfoundland because of the sudden rise in the standard of living in the decades following Confederation with Canada. The term "generation gap" takes on new meaning in a family where the father grew up without electricity or running water and quit attending the two room school in order to help support the family, and where now this father's teenage son complains about not being able to play his stereo louder while doing his computer studies homework that he has to get done so he can watch cable TV from Detroit.

This theme of change, of contrast in the experiences of the older generation and the new is one that is to be found again and again in my writing. It is quite noticeable in *Thirty-six Exposures*, the most recent of the novels.

Thirty-six Exposures is the shortest, yet it was the hardest of the three novels to write. This time I did not have the advantage of the easy flow of first person narration. I was trying to tell Lorne's story from the third person viewpoint and I had established a rigid structure, that of 36 short chapters, 36 exposures, 36 glimpses into Lorne's life over a four month period.

It is a book that takes more chances than any of the others I have written. It is experimental in form

and is meant for a more mature audience than either of the other two books. Some readers have had trouble understanding the reasons for the starkly controlled writing. As have many of the reviewers, much to my irritation.

Lorne, the central character, is an avid photographer, as I used to be for many years. Lorne stands apart from his peers, daydreaming of what the future will bring, as I still do. While Lorne is not me, he is the closest I have come to putting my own adolescence into a book. We share some of the same traits; some of the situations we faced are similar.

Lorne is 17. His character grew in part out of a need to say something about the pressures to be sexually active from a teenage male perspective, and something about the adolescent's need to come to his own conclusions about the world around him, in his own time, in his own way.

Lorne has grown up sheltered from the rawer side of life in his community. He is shy; he views life from a distance, from behind his camera. He is in the last few months of high school, uncertain about many things – his relationship with his parents, and his future, among others. Yet he is filled with an idealism.

It takes tragedy to show Lorne how much he needs his father and mother. In spite of all the distance that sometimes exists between teenagers and their parents, there is that ultimate bond, as Lorne said, "a love that does not ask questions." At the end of the novel he has come to a new appreciation of his family, but he had to come to it through his own experience. As adults, as parents, there is only so much we can expect to impart to young people. Each generation must come to their own conclusions, and we cannot expect to deny them the experiences from which to draw them.

If there is a message in *Thirty-six Exposures*, it is that rebellion can be healthy; the idealism of youth is a strength, not a weakness.

All three of my books have been criticized for the use of strong language and the reference to the sexual lives of the characters. I have known libraries which refuse to carry my work. I have been scheduled to give readings, and have had them cancelled. I have been asked by educators to rewrite *Hold Fast* into a so-called "school" edition. I say, listen, these aspects of my work are there because they are an integral part of the characters and story. And if the readers cannot take the characters to be believeable, how can I expect them to take seriously what I'm trying to say in the books. Sex and strong language play no greater or no lesser a part in my work than they do in real life. The truth is both are preoccupations of adolescents as is their family life, school, their relationships with friends.

And literature is, after all, one very important means by which we see how other people live. Their speech, their attitudes, their lifestyles, may be quite different from our own, but it is a vital part of our education to share in their lives. It makes us broader-minded, more tolerant individuals.

If there are words that have the same impact and convey the same meaning as the ones I first write, but may be less offensive to some people, then I'll make the second choice. But other than that I make no attempt to tone down my writing for the sake of other people's sensibilities. If they don't want to read my work, fine, that is their choice. But neither should they deny others the opportunity to read it. We supposedly live in a free society, and it is an open traffic in ideas that makes us free.

Writing about young people is not a trivial undertaking. During adolescence we encounter the most deeply felt things in life – love, fear of rejection, death perhaps, and intense happiness. We often respond with greater emotion than at any other point in our lives. Adolescence is often a worrisome period of pressures – pressure to do well in school, to gain acceptance from friends, to cope with problems without the benefit of experience that adults often take for granted.

As an author who has chosen to write about them, I feel a responsibility to young people to speak the truth. To say yes, all is not well in the world, that others have troubles, just as you have troubles. And I feel equally the responsibility to say that youth is a joyous time. I like to think that my books leave the teenage reader with a sense of optimism about his/her place in the world.

Biography and Books of Kevin Major on page 6

BIOGRAPHY AND BOOKS OF KEVIN MAJOR

Judith Bugniazet
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Kevin Major was born in 1949, the son of a Newfoundland fisherman. He began writing while still in high school. At the point in his life where he had to decide on a career, he was ready to enter medical school when he realized that his first love was writing. He decided to enroll in the department of education at Memorial University and teach.

When Major started teaching, in 1972, he realized how little there was published about the Newfoundland culture and heritage. It was out of this concern that his first book, *Doryloads* (1974) was born. *Doryloads* is a compilation of short stories about Newfoundland. He then left teaching to write full-time. Major's second book, *Hold Fast*, won instant acclaim and many awards: the Best Books of the Year 1980 by **The School Library Journal**, Children's Literature Award from the Canada Council, Book-of-the-year award from the Canadian Association of Children's Librarians and the Ruth Schwartz Children's Book Award. It was also placed on the Hans Christian Andersen Honor list for 1980. *Far From Shore*, his next book received the Canadian Young Adult Book Award for 1980 and was named Best Books of the Year 1981 by **The School Library Journal**.

Major's central theme is the clash between the traditional Canadian ways of life and the wave of new ideas, attitudes and values. When he began writing he did not write for a specific age group. He knew teenagers would have a particular interest in his writings because he wrote about 14-17 year-old boys, but many adults enjoy his books as well.

His main objectives are to say something about growing up, with all the problems involved, and "to portray life in present-day Newfoundland outport society, a society that has changed drastically in the space of 30 years since Newfoundland joined Canada." He meets all his goals in his writings with great sensitivity and manages, at the same time, to give the reader a real feel for the Newfoundland lifestyle.

Doryloads. Breakwater, 1974.
A book of stories and tales of Newfoundland.

Far From Shore. Delacorte, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-02455-2.
This book follows the life of a Newfoundland family through trying times. The story is told in the first person by members of the family: Chris, Jennifer and their parents. Chris is the main character. He's 15 and at a very irresponsible stage in his life. He fails tenth grade, and becomes a member of a rough crowd of older boys. He's arrested for a crime he can't remember committing because of his drinking. Chris, despite his many problems, is an endearing character. It is hard to be responsible when you're only 15 and emotionally on your own.

Hold Fast. Delacorte, 1979. ISBN: 0-440-03506-6.
"No mercy for the drunk who drives cars and kills people. Parents of people." Fourteen-year-old Michael and his seven-year-old brother are orphaned, and at the mercy of their family. They're separated, and Brent stays in Marten with their Grandfather and Aunt Flo, and Michael is sent to St. Albert to live with Uncle Ted, Aunt Ellen, Marie and Curtis. Michael shares a room with Curtis, who seems to be a meek bookworm, unable to stand up for himself, especially against his autocratic father. When Michael has trouble at school, and is virtually attacked by his Uncle, he decides to run away. He is surprised when Curtis wants to go with him. These two young men run and learn to "hold fast" in the wild Canadian Province of Newfoundland.

Thirty-six Exposures. Delacorte, 1984. ISBN: 0-385-29347-X.
Seventeen-year-old Lorne is a sensitive and artistic boy. He is a very good photographer and poet. To the delight of this reader, the book is interspersed with his poetry.

The last months before graduation are confusing for Lorne. He has a run-in with an autocratic teacher, and learns tolerance. He becomes a friend of a wild boy named Trevor, and learns to let go. He begins a relationship with a nice girl, and learns love and restraint. He finally has to confront his future and decide if he wants to stay or leave Newfoundland.

READER'S REACT

More "Books That Sing To The Soul"

Moves Make the Man (Brooks)
A Chance Child (Paton Walsh)
Judith Higgins
Valhalla Public Schools
Valhalla, NY

Waiting for Johnny Miracle (Bach)
Little Little (Kerr)
Dandelion Wine (Bradbury)
The Cay (Taylor)
A Day No Pigs Would Die (R.N. Peck)
Pardon Me, You're Stepping On My Eyeball (Zindel)
Anne Licciardello
Timberlane Regional Junior High School
Plaistow, NH

The House on Prague Street (Demetz)
Only Love (Sallis)
A Parcel of Patterns (Paton Walsh)
Good Night, Mr. Tom (Magorian)
Across Five Aprils (Hunt)
Janet D. McOuat
San Pedro, CA

Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack (Kerr)
The Sign of the Chrysanthemum (Paterson)
The Cat Ate My Gymsuit (Danziger)

Listed below are several titles of children's books which my secondary students have thoroughly enjoyed. (Good read alouds!)

Lafcadio (Silverstein)
Ben's Dream (Van Allsburg)
Ming Lo Moves the Mountain (Lobel)
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (Robinson)
Jan Fisher
Penn Manor School District
Millersville, PA

The Light in the Forest (Richter)
The Pearl (Steinbeck)
Dream Watcher (Wersba)
The Pigman (Zindel)
Romeo and Juliet (Shakespeare)
Dorothy Thom
Spring Valley Junior High School
Spring Valley, NY

After the First Death (Cormier)
The Owl Service (Garner)
The Kestral (Alexander)
Virginia Monseau
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, OH

The Beethoven Medal (Peyton)
Alan Mendelsohn, the Boy from Mars (Pinkwater)
A Summer to Die (Lowery)
Winning (Brancato)
Sharron Freeman
Kulit
West Hartford, CT

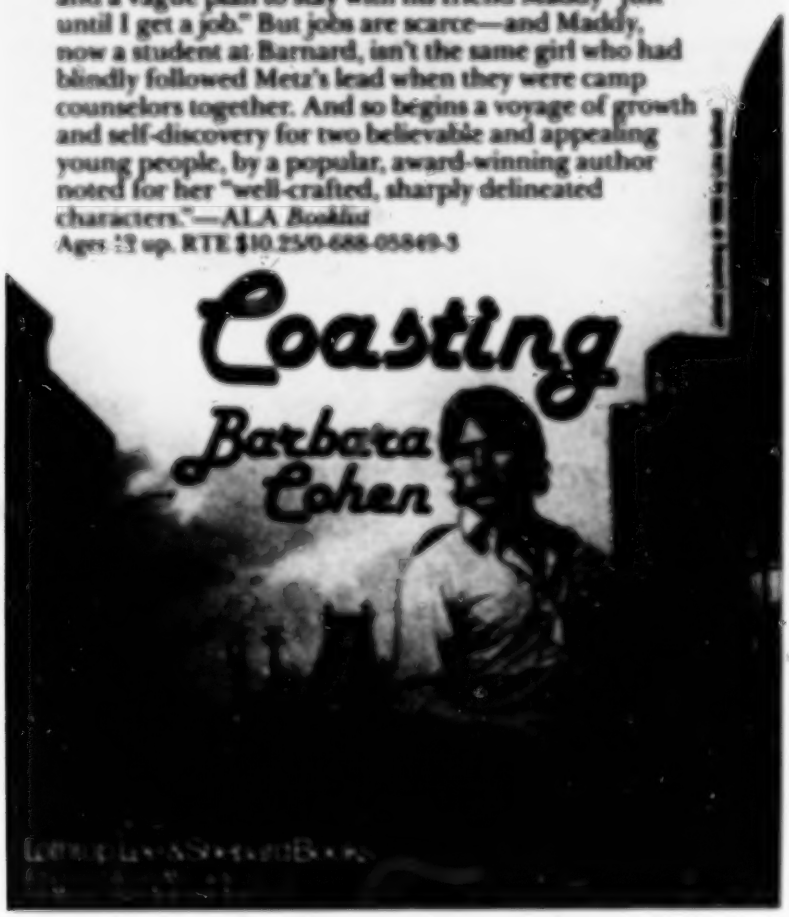
The Pond (Murphy)
Jim Trelease
Reading Tree Productions
Author, Read Aloud Handbook
Springfield, MA

The People Therein (Lee)
Far from Home (Sebestyen)
Dave P. Tuttle
Mesa Public Library
Mesa, AZ

Editors Note: What a wonderful idea! Several of the titles you have sent are cross-over books, books written for children or adults which appeal to your students. As long as you keep the titles coming, I'll continue our list of "books that sing to the soul."

"I ♥ NY,"
says the guidebook title—
in the warmest, funniest, most moving young adult novel in years.

Steven Metzger, postponing college, arrives in New York with his Michelin guidebook, his California tan, and a vague plan to stay with his friend Maddy "just until I get a job." But jobs are scarce—and Maddy, now a student at Barnard, isn't the same girl who had blindly followed Metz's lead when they were camp counselors together. And so begins a voyage of growth and self-discovery for two believable and appealing young people, by a popular, award-winning author noted for her "well-crafted, sharply delineated characters."—ALA *Booklist*
Ages 12 up. RTE $10.25/0-688-05849-3



Compliments and Complaints

The article on Isabelle Holland was great.

Wendy Bell
Enka High School
Enka, NC

I recently read ALAN's interview with Isabelle Holland, which was terrific! The ALAN Review has come a long way under your guidance as an extremely valuable resource for publishers and educators, and we look forward enthusiastically to future issues.

Janet Sarvitz
Education Associate
Ballantine - Del Rey - Fawcett
New York, NY

Incidently, your magazine should include some material directed to the junior high level. The Spring 1985 issue was disappointing to me because it was geared to only senior high teachers.

Dorothy Thom
Spring Valley Junior High School
Spring Valley, NY

Editor's Note: Junior high and middle school teachers and librarians take note. Articles about using young adult books in your classrooms and libraries are sought.

The ALAN Workshop

Bravo for a **Diamond** 5-star program in Philadelphia! Rarely does one have the opportunity of experiencing such excellent company and presentations as th Ge by Zindel, Conford, Cormier, Daringer, Bridgers, et al! The entire ALAN group is to be commended for their magnificent work and effort! Looking forward to your next "gala event" in San Antonio!

Kathleen Ponder
Rochester Hills, MI

Editor's Note: Special congratulations to past President Dick Abrahamson who organized the program. For those who were unable to attend, summaries of many of the sessions appear on pages 19 -23 of this issue. See you next year in San Antonio!

Publisher's Correspondence

Our Education Department has recently produced a full-color "Wonder and Wizardry" poster depicting our most popular Del Rey Fantasy books.

Our collection of teachers' guides to such popular and enduring titles as **Fahrenheit 451**, **On the Beach**, **The Shorter Novels of Herman Melville**, Cynthia Voigt's **Dicey's Song**, Bette Greene's **Them That Glitter and Them That Don't** and Studs Terkel's **Working** continues to expand and will soon include a guide to the **Foundation** trilogy by Isaac Asimov. We also print a series of Author Profiles featuring biographical information and anecdotes often written by the authors themselves.

Janet Sarvitz
Education Associate
Ballantine - Del Rey - Fawcett
201 East 50th St.
New York, NY 10022

As you probably know, a movie version of Alice Walker's **The Color Purple** will be released later this month . . . To tie-in with the movie's release, Pocket Books has published a mass market edition of the Pulitzer-Prize winning novel . . . In order to encourage classroom use of the book, we have prepared (a) teacher's guide, which is available to educators free of charge. The guide was written by Charlotte Kendrick Brooks, an English teacher and past president of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Mary Frundt
Director, Education Department
Pocket Books
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

A TEENAGER'S PRAYER

Richard Peck

Oh, Supreme Being, and I don't mean me:

Give me the vision to see my parents as human beings because if they aren't, what does that make me?

Give me vocabulary because the more I say you know, the less anyone does.

Give me freedom from television because I'm beginning to distrust its happy endings.

Give me sex education to correct what I first heard from thirteen-year-olds.

Give me homework to keep me from flunking Free Time.

Give me a map of the world so I may see that this town and I are not the center of it.

Give me the knowledge that conformity is the enemy of friendship.

Give me the understanding that nobody ever grows up in a group, so that I may find my own way.

Give me limits so I will know I'm loved.

Give me nothing I haven't earned so that this adolescence doesn't last forever.

Amen

PROFESSIONAL RICHES: THE TEXTBOOKS ARE HERE!

W. Geiger Ellis,
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

Nilsen, Alleen Pace and Kenneth L. Donelson. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, Second Edition, 1985. 661 pp. Scott, Foresman & Co. $20.30

Probst, Robert E. *Adolescent Literature: Response and Analysis*, 1984. 260 pp. Charles E. Merrill Co. $18.50

Reed, Arthea J. S. *Reaching Adolescents: The Young Adult Book and the School*, 1985. 487 pp. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $22.95

The past academic year brought us a trio of fine professional books. I hesitate to call them textbooks, although they certainly are that, because these books belong on the professional bookshelf of anyone who keeps up with our field. These books complement one another as each has its own focus: Reed's book concentrates on teaching methodologies from various perspectives; Probst offers a thorough treatment of response-based literature teaching (a la Rosenblatt); the Nilsen/Donelson book remains a book primarily about the literature itself. The nature of the course to be taught should be the major factor in selecting the textbook. In any case each of these books is a "must read" for professionals in literature for adolescents, whether you teach a college course or in a secondary school.

Reading Adolescents is an apt title because it conveys the pedagogical nature of this textbook. While three (3, 4, and 6) of the 13 chapters focus primarily on young adult literature itself, the rest of the book deals mainly with young readers and getting them together with this literature. The first chapter opens by addressing the issue of whether young people can or do read and moves to a discussion of stages of reading development. Students' needs and interests are examined together with the teacher's role, which is the central topic of the second chapter as it deals with the motivating of readers. The first of a number of sample units concludes the chapter in characteristic fashion, as Reed consistently provides concrete examples for teaching.

Many different categories of books are presented in Chapter 3 with a brief discussion of each grouping and numerous examples. There is the usual litany of topics (sexuality, pregnancy, drugs, etc.) for "problem" novels, followed by a variety of "hero" (sports, handicapped, cross-cultural, etc.) books, then mystery and suspense, fantasy and science fiction and a final page on folklore, legend, myth and religion. Chapter 4 explores some of the emotional emphasis found in young adult literature – "good cry" novels, relationships of all kinds and humor. The sixth chapter offers much the same approach to nonfiction, poetry and short stories. The first of these areas covers biography, history, social issues, ethnic literature, career guidance, how-to books, science, math and puzzle books. There are arguments for teaching poetry and some suggested teaching procedures. Then a number of short story collections are discussed. Chapter 5 does not maintain the same focus on literature as the other chapters in Part Two. It examines the transitional nature of the teen years – leaving childhood, metamorphosing and entering adulthood. Each stage is discussed together with numerous books appropriate for a consideration of that stage.

Chapters 7 through 11, which make up Part Three, offer wide-ranging suggestions for incorporating this literature into the secondary school classroom. Heavy emphasis is placed on thematic units, with several sample units provided. Chapter 7 introduces the use of thematic units, and Chapter

8 focuses specifically on their use in English classrooms. Care is taken to integrate the varied components of the English curriculum into a unit. Chapter 9 covers the corresponding use of literature in social studies classes. The roles of biography, historical fiction and social problem novels are central to this approach.

Chapter 10 gives suggestions for using young adult literature across the curriculum, including science, physical education, art and mathematics. Again, sample units are provided. Chapter 11 details a full range of teaching methods to heighten involvement with books. This is not just a collection of teaching ideas, but an examination of a hierarchy of approaches to teaching based on Edgar Dale's "cone of experience," ranging from direct experience through contrived and dramatized experiences to demonstrations, field trips, exhibits, television, motion pictures and recordings. This chapter concludes with twenty pages of ideas for sharing literary experiences, from reading aloud to storytelling to book talks.

Chapter 12 discusses sources of information about young adult books, including "best book" lists, awards, reviews and bibliographies, followed by suggestions for building a classroom library. The topic of the final chapter is censorship, with an examination of legal developments, the role of professional organizations and suggestions for dealing with this problem.

The appendices helpfully provide the names and addresses of publishers of young adult books and a time line, which graphically portrays the history of this field. A unique and enriching feature of this text is the frequent meshing with the professional content of "anthological asides," extended (two to six pages) passages from a variety of young adult books. In short, this book is a coherent and rich source for making literature a vibrant experience in a variety of classrooms.

There is now a book for those who have read Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* and come away feeling convinced that they had encountered a fine theory, but also feeling somewhat lost about how to interpret that theory into classroom practice. There have been attempts to make such an interpretation in the past, but none has been so effective as Probst's *Adolescent Literature: Response and Analysis.*

It succeeds both in content and form. Although the topical focus shifts from part to part and from chapter to chapter, the content is an efficient blend of theory and practice throughout. The explanation of theory frequently incorporates specific classroom examples detailing specific practices and works of literature. It would be inaccurate to characterize this book as being primarily theoretical or practical, for it is both. In form the reader is treated not only to an orderly coverage of the subject but also to articulate expression that is eloquent. Trying to characterize this book brings to mind such descriptors as satisfying, useful and important.

Part I provides an explanation of response-based literature teaching through examinations of the relationships between the reader and the text, between the reader and other readers and between the text and other texts. No topic is dealt with in isolation; rather, each is discussed as it relates to this particular appraoch to teaching. For example, adolescents are not discussed as objects of studies by educational psychologists, detailing their characteristics and growth patterns. Only those aspects of adolescents that relate to their reading behavior are included. This is not to say that complete knowledge of readers is immaterial, but such a treatment is better left to psychology texts if the appropriate focus is to be maintained on literature study.

Many concepts are related to poems presented in this book. Such an approach makes concrete the theoretical considerations relating to possible responses, problems, necessary conditions, preparation for teaching, classroom activities and teacher's role to name but a few of the areas covered.

Part II is focused on the literature itself. As poetry, short stories and novels are discussed, it is always in terms of some specific application or example. While most of the book is applicable to the teaching of any literature, the longest chapter deals primarily with adolescent literature. The intent is not to cover the considerable field this subject has come to embody. Indeed, Probst refers his readers to the Nilsen and Donelson text for such a treatment. The purpose here is to see how a response-based approach might work with this body of litera-

ture. Each topic, such as sexuality and violence, is treated in terms of specific works of adolescent literature and always with a consideration for response-based teaching. Also, there are extensive bibliographies of books relating to several topics. There is a separate chapter on visual literacy which presents student-centered teaching suggestions for exploring film and television and their effects on viewers and viewer responses.

The concluding section takes up the impact of a response-based approach on the literature curriculum and on evaluation and testing. The transactional model is set in historical perspective to help clarify its current effects. The subjective and personal nature of literature is seen as making traditional testing antithetical to the important purposes of teaching. However, direction is given through the presentation of some suggested alternatives to traditional grading.

The last chapter is a summary of current literary theory. This lucid discussion of subjective criticism, transactional criticism, reception aesthetics and structuralism makes clear the sound underpinnings of the response-based approach.

The Nilsen/Donelson book, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, has retained all of its original strengths while adding some new ones. This is a literature book, or perhaps more pointedly the literature book, that provides comprehensive information about young adult literature. Rather than recounting the original book, which I assume most professionals have read, I will discuss only how this edition differs from the first edition.

One minor change worthy of note, other than the reversal of the authors' names, is the use of larger type throughout. That certainly eased the reading, at least for these middle-aged eyes. Additions and expansions constitute the most notable changes. Two new chapters further expand the book's considerable scope. Chapter nine, "Poetry, Drama, and Humor," covers each of these topics with the insightful care characteristic of these authors. Some of the subheadings include "Poetry written or collected specifically for young adults," "Poetry for sophisticated readers," "The writing and reading connection," "Films, television, and comics," "Children's books and wordplay," "YA novels and humor," "Humor and poetry," "Some gentle satires," "More sophisticated satire," "Wacky British humor and parodies," "The humor of death" and "The ultimate in humor."

"Censorship," a subheading in the first edition, is an entire chapter this time, and appropriately so, considering the continuing blatant assaults on freedoms in this country. following a brief history of this concern, there is an assessment of current censorship in classrooms and libraries, supported by the citing of numerous specific cases. Then a more reflective approach is taken as guides and suggestions for better understanding and handling of the problem are presented. Throughout, there is ample specific supporting documentation.

A number of special features further enhance this excellent source book. The content of the old Chapter 14, "The People Behind the Books," has been updated and retained by having these statements by individuals sprinkled through the book. Once again each chapter is concluded with good bibliographies and suggested activities. The ones I have tried with my students have worked well, providing enriched learning for them. Also, the appendices expand the book's use as a reference tool by furnishing a wide variety of professional bibliographies, and the Honor Sampling has been retained and brought up to date. This one feature by itself has been continually useful in helping me respond to requests for suggestions for books to be purchased by libraries or for best books to read to get acquainted with young adult literature.

The three chapters on the history of young adult literature have been moved to the back of the book. Thus the old Part Two has become the new Part Four. An addition to this section is the expanded treatment of the development of public and school libraries in America.

Other chapters were similarly expanded with increased treatment of some topics or the addition of new subjects. For example, the subject of friendship, beyond the typical boy-girl relationships, is discussed in the chapter on romanticism. Chapter 7 expands its handling of heroes with new sections on "Heroes in death," and "Heroes of the holocaust." The treatment of animal books is expanded into its own section of Chapter 8, "Informational Books." And Chapter 13, "Issues and Concerns for Adults," has added sections on publishing as a business and

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WORLD WAR II AND ITS RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S ADOLESCENTS

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Adolescents today have only a fuzzy view of World War II. They see it as ancient history or an event glorified and romanticized in old John Wayne movies. They do not understand what Nazi Germany was like or why the war was fought. World War II was a significant global conflict which changed countless peoples' views of the nature of man and society. Particularly significant to adolescents today, in our age of global tensions, are the profound effects a government at war can have on a person's daily existence. These effects are especially heightened for adolescents since they are already going through an uncertain period in search of their personal identities. By reading about others who have dealt with constant fear and anxiety during war, adolescents today can obtain some insights into their own feelings and options for coping with and attempting to prevent situations of conflict.

In *The Other Way Round* by Judith Kerr, *Ceremony of Innocence* by James Forman, *Mischling, Second Degree* by Ilse Koehn, and *Night* by Elie Wiesel, young Europeans are affected in different ways by World War II. For some it has a direct, devastating effect; for others the effect is less obvious but ever-constant and oppressive. Since the young people are affected in a variety of ways, they use different methods to deal with their individual situations. In all instances, however, philosophical questions concerning the nature of man, the meaning of existence, the purpose of life and the importance of support or nonsupport of one's government are considered. And, of course, since each book is set in Europe during the War, information unfolds concerning policies of the governments involved, the major battles fought and the daily frustrations caused by such actions as rationing and restrictions on freedoms.

The novel *The Other Way Round* presents a particularly personal view of a girl's attempt to grow up during the war. Anna and her family are early refugees from Nazi Germany. In 1933, after Anna's father, a noted Jewish writer, comes out publicly and strongly against Hitler's regime, he and his family are forced to flee to Switzerland, France and finally to England, where the novel takes place.

In 1940 Anna is a typical 15-year-old whose normal adolescent insecurity is compounded by being an outcast in a foreign country. Since her parents are struggling financially and are forced to place her in boarding schools and with friends, she feels "like a parcel, to be tossed about, handed from one person to another, without knowing who (will) be holding her next" (p. 8). Anna, therefore, sees the effects of the war, in a personal way, as a direct assault on her attempts to lead a happy, normal life. She even begins to blame herself for the things that have happened. She feels unlucky because in every country she has lived, there has been suffering. She tells her brother, "Look what's happened to Germany. And in France we'd hardly been there a year before they had a Depression. And as for England – you remember how solid it seemed when we came, and now there's a war and rationing" (p. 38).

However, Anna does not give up attempts to improve her situation. She finds a job, a task made more difficult because she is not British-born. But, then as a resident of London, she sees the war slowly encroach on all aspects of her daily life. At first, few people are concerned because there has been no direct bombing of London. Then everything quickly escalates; Hitler invades Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Holland. Anna's brother Max, who has successfully moved into English life by obtaining a scholarship to Cambridge, is detained as a male enemy alien. Fortunately, he is eventually released and joins the Royal Air Force. Then begins a long period of bombings with the resultant uncertainty and fear.

During this time Anna constantly struggles to find her place in life, which she finally does through her art work. She signs up for night courses, develops her talent, and, by the end of the war, receives a scholarship to a reputable art school. She now belongs somewhere.

Anna also grows in her understanding of the War. She has always realized that the War has disrupted and ruined many lives, but she hasn't thought before of its long-term effects on older people. When she was younger, her parents made her feel safe, not like a refugee. However, she and her brother, as young people, have been able to adjust and find a place in their new country. Now, for her parents, who can never be fully assimilated, everything is "the other way round." "The only times *they* don't feel like refugees is when they're with" (p. 266) their children.

In *The Other Way Round*, Anna lives in a country whose policies she accepts. What should young adults who disapprove of their country's policies do? *Ceremony of Innocence* concerns such a situation. The novel is a fictionalized account of two real people, Hans and Sophie Scholl who, in the face of Nazi authority, dare to distribute leaflets in Munich denouncing the Nazi regime and are executed for their actions. They are non-Jewish Germans who could have lead normal, successful lives as university students, but each makes a conscious decision to act against the government.

The book unfolds in an interesting manner. It is told from Hans's point-of-view as he is sitting in prison after his arrest, awaiting his trial and subsequent execution. Between interrogations, Hans looks back on his life and attempts to understand why he had allowed himself to be put into this situation. He also must decide whether to plead insanity in hopes of mercy or to stand by his actions in the face of certain death. The reader, therefore, obtains a clear view of Hans's inner turmoil.

Even though Hans is the author of the leaflets, he has constantly had doubts. His sister Sophie has not. She has always been the one with the "indestructible convictions" (p. 15). Her convictions are built on her religious faith, which allows her to believe that she will live through eternity, and on her naive belief that since they are right, others will rise up against the Nazi regime with them. However, Hans does not believe in an afterlife or in the naive view that right always will triumph. Then, why does he go through with the writing and distributing of the pamphlets? In a way Sophie acts as his conscience, forcing him into action; but he is also unable to ignore the evil aspects of Nazi life that surround him.

Hans first becomes disillusioned with Hitler in 1933 when, as a Hitler Youth, he realizes he almost is swept up by Hitler's hypnotic and fanatical power. Therefore, he tries to focus his efforts on his medical studies, but he continuously is forced to confront certain evils. He and his friends see a young Jew beaten and eventually killed for riding on a carousel. His sister works with mentally retarded children and is horrified to find they are being shipped off to be killed. He is sent as a medical aid to the Russian front to try to patch up soldiers being senselessly slaughtered.

Hans's experiences in the military make him decide that "self-preservation should be a sensible man's first and only thought" (p. 114). However, he cannot continue to stand by as an idle observer. As he says in his "White Rose" leaflets and in his "Leaflets from the Resistance," "Nothing is less worthy of a civilized country that passively to allow itself to be *governed* by an irresponsible gang of bosses who have surrendered to their lower instincts" (p. 89).

As Hans sits in jail and looks back on these and other events, he realizes that for himself there has been no other choice. What he has "done was right, however futile . . . To have acted otherwise would have been to share forever the guilt of a guilty land" (p. 218).

Hans Scholl feels he has no other choice than the one he makes, but others faced with similar situations make different choices. Ilse Koehn, a young girl in Nazi Germany, also despises the aims of Hitler, but her life takes a different direction from that of Hans.

In *Mischling, Second Degree*, Ilse Koehn gives an autobiographical account of a life made up of deceptions. To survive, Ilse outwardly pretends to believe in the Nazi regime and even becomes a member of the Hitler Youth movement. Her dislike for the policies of the regime are fostered by her parents' beliefs, but she has another reason to fear

Hitler's rule – her paternal grandmother is Jewish, making Ilse a Mischling, second degree, technically governed by Anti-Jewish laws. To protect her from this fate, her parents hide their Jewish connection, even from Ilse, and obtain a divorce. Ilse and her mother are then forced to live with her mother's family.

In 1939 at the age of ten, Ilse has trouble refraining from confiding in her friends, but as she grows older, she has less difficulty. At school there is constant supervision and Nazi indoctrination. Ilse knows there are others who share her beliefs and are afraid to make an open demonstration of their views, but she can never let down her guard.

Ilse also has to face the guilt of her country. Her father is acutely aware of it and tells her of atrocities performed by Germany, saying, "I want (you) to know why all Germans, anything German, will soon be something hateful and despicable to the rest of the world" (p. 57). This guilt and the secret hope that the Allies will win quickly further complicate her life. As a Berliner, Ilse sees Allied air attacks killing innocent women and children and the takeover of Berlin by the Russians. However, she and her family see the otherthrow of the Hitler regime as their only hope for salvation.

In *Night*, an autobiography by Elie Wiesel, there is no hope of salvation. This book portrays the most devastating effects of a war. A boy loses not only his family but also his religious beliefs, his innocent view of life and his belief in mankind. In a way, the book is a testimony to what passivity, lack of resistance and an inability to face reality can create. Elie Wiesel emphasizes the inability of the people of his town in Transylvania to believe the atrocities being perpetrated against the Jews.

It is 1941, and 12-year-old Elie, is a profound believer. He is in awe of Moche the Beadle, who discusses religious questions with him. In 1942, Moche the Beadle is expelled as a foreign Jew and returns to tell horror stories of mass graves and slaughtering of people. However, no one believes him, not even Elie. The people of the small town passively await their horrible fate and make no attempts to flee, thinking that anything so horrible is impossible. As the author says, "People were interested in everything . . . but not their own fate" (p. 6). Then the spring of 1944 comes, and the Germans take over the town, but the people decide not to worry. What is so bad about living in ghettos and wearing yellow stars? Then they are herded into cattle cars and shipped to a place of flames and the "smell of burning flesh" (p. 26).

At first Elie sees everything as a nightmare, but as he walks toward the crematories at Auschwitz and people begin to pray, he feels "revolt rise up in" him against a God who could allow such horrors. That night turns Elie's life "into one long night." As he says, "Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever" and "that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live" (p. 32).

Elie quickly loses his faith in God and his faith in humanity. Everything about the camp is dehumanizing, and this dehumanization takes place rapidly in the name of survival. By the second day, Elie is able to stand without flinching as he sees his father struck by a guard. Occasionally, Elie is sickened by killing, as he is when a young boy is hanged. Generally, however, the fact that thousands die daily does not bother him or prevent him from eating well.

One thing Elie tries to hold onto is his loyalty to his father, but he loses even that. He resents his father when he is unable to prevent guards from beating him, and "in the recesses of (his) weakened conscience feels free at last" when his father dies (p. 106). When Elie is freed by the Americans at the age of 15, he is a corpse whose only thought is food, "not of revenge, not of (his) family" (p. 109). He is left forever with that image of himself.

Obviously, these four stories of suffering during World War II do not provide any clear answers to our present global problems, but they can bring individuals, both young and old, to the realization that everyone contributes to the problems and the solutions through action and inaction. With the present threat of nuclear annihilation, we have all in a strange way, as Elie Wiesel said after viewing the movie *The Day After*, become Jews facing the ultimate Holocaust together.

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continued on page 70

TELLING THE TALE

Wilbur C. Ward,
Curtin Middle School, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

In 1966 Elie Wiesel published a book called *The Gates of the Forest*. He began his story by stating, "God made man because he loves stories" (p. 10). In this symbolic fashion Wiesel was referring to an essential human characteristic. We are storytellers, and the stories we tell are as much a part of us as they are a part of the times from which they are created. The fiction of Marilyn Sachs, I.G. Edmonds, Pamela Melnikoff, Judith Kerr, Hans Peter Richter, Rusia Lampel and Sally Watson reveal to the reader both the history and humanity of the Jewish people.

Jewish history is a story of persecution, captivity, struggle, wanderings, self-doubt, triumph and tragedy. It was no accident that, in reviewing Chaim Potok's *History of the Jews*, the New York Post said that it was "told with a poet's grace and a storyteller's flow." History can be, when well-told, the most exciting kind of narrative. I.G. Edmonds, in *Joel of the Hanging Gardens*, tells the story of a boy who is a slave in ancient Babylon. Joel is appointed to the water-works that irrigate the grounds of the Hanging Gardens. Since he is only a child, he has more freedom than the older servants. Guards do not see him as a threat. The Persian king, Cyrus, is about to attack Babylon, and slaves in the city are suspect. However, Joel eludes supervision and helps the invading army. Edmonds has told a story full of excitement and adventure, but it is also a story which presents the early years of slavery and captivity endured by the Jewish nation in exile.

The Star and the Sword, by Pamela Melnikoff, continues the theme of persecution and wanderings. In Medieval England Benedict and Elvira are two Jewish children who witness the murder of their parents during a pogrom. Afraid of further persecution the children hide their identity and go to relatives in Oxford. The journey is extremely dangerous, and along the way the children meet Robin Hood, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and a Crusader knight. Melnikoff's description of the pogrom is particularly vivid:

> Almost all of the townsfolk seemed to be massed in the square, under the darkening sky, streaked now with the last of its crimson and gold. Some of them held blazing torches; some brandished daggers and staves and axes; some were gnawing chunks of bread and meat or quaffing tankards of wine; some were laughing or singing or shouting. And then someone with a loud voice began to yell "Kill them! Kill the Jews!" and other voices took up the cry till the roofs and rafters and darkening heavens seemed to ring with it. (p. 27)

The word "persecution" is, perhaps, too polite a term for what was mass murder or, simply, slaughter.

Marilyn Sachs, in *Call Me Ruth* and in *A Pocket Full of Seeds*, speaks of both Russian and German persecution of local Jewish communities. She remembers:

> Every Jewish child in our town knew about pogroms. There wasn't anything you could do to prevent them – no prayers to say or charms to carry. They could happen anytime and nobody was safe when they did. Only a few months ago, the Cossacks had come riding through our village on a day when I was on my way home from playing with a friend. I can remember the people screaming and the Cossacks riding over them and hacking at them with their swords. One of them came after me, his drunken face flushed and the sweat dripfrom his horse's neck. I ran and my mother's screams of "Rifka! Rifka!" guided me to her. We both hid underneath our bed, trembling at the tearing, breaking sounds and the shrieks of our friends and neighbors from outside. (p. 8)

No simple statement that a pogrom occurred on a particular date, that a particular number of people were killed, and that a certain amount of property damage was done can rival the fictional recreation of the actual event. The danger is that, with the passing of years, people may forget the true meaning of terms such as pogrom, the final solution land the Holocaust. These are, after all, just words.

Judith Kerr, in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, tells the story of Anna, a nine-year-old Jewish girl living in Berlin in 1933. Like any girl her age, Anna has no time to notice the ugly face glaring at her from the political posters all over the city. However, as events proceed, and Anna's family must leave Germany, the reality of the Nazis comes to the girl with the clarity with which any child sees tyranny and cruelty. The reader can see many parallels to the author's own childhood. Judith Kerr remembers what it was like to be a child; particularly, she can recreate that childhood with a startling, yet mild, clarity.

Friedrich, by Hans Peter Richter, is a particularly chilling account of the life of a Jewish boy named Friedrich Schneider, born in Germany in 1925. Friedrich has a best friend, a Gentile boy of the same age, who joins Hitler's "Jungvolk." However, when Friedrich attempts to join the same club, his membership is refused. This is only the first of many humiliations to come as Friedrich's friend narrates the story. As the persecution increases, the excuses increase: "It's none of our concern. After all, we're not involved. Look out for number one, and don't get your family in trouble by asking too many questions. If you ask questions, you will disappear too." Friedrich, at the age of 17, is killed in an air raid, but Dr. Hans Peter Richter has kept his friend's memory alive since 1942. Anne Frank and Friedrich Schneider are still alive; however, so is Adolf Hitler. Whose memory will last longer?

Due in some measure to the effects of the Holocaust, the state of Israel was established a short three years after the end of World War II. Rusia

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Lampel, in *That Summer With Ora*, and Sally Watson, in *Other Sandals*, write of modern Israel and of the problems young girls face while growing up in that embattled country.

When in one of his many reflective moods, Tevye the Milkman from *Fiddler on the Roof* says, "Dear God! I know that we are your chosen people, but just once couldn't you choose someone else!" It is a story of extremes, from the early days of captivity to the establishment of modern Israel. However, no one can say that it was not worth the trip. The story of Joel in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Benedict and Elvira in twelfth-century England, Ruth and Friedrich facing their respective challenges and the story of Ora and Devra Meyer in Israel are all parts of a larger narrative which is not yet complete. The story of the Jewish nation at home or in exile will continue because by living the people continue the tale.

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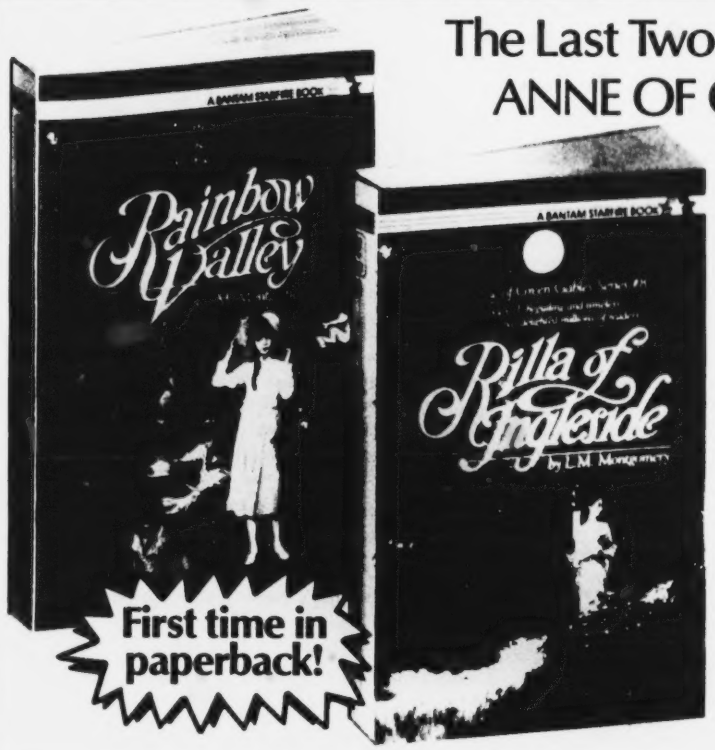

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REPORT FROM THE ALAN WORKSHOP: Philadelphia, 1985

Young Adult Literature: Writing It and Teaching With It

Jim Trelease on Reading Aloud

Hollis Lowery-Moore
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, Texas

Jim Trelease, author of *The Read Aloud Handbook*, kicked off the workshop with his call for evangelism in turning kids on to good books. Trelease shared some alarming facts: TV Guide is the most profitable newsstand product, second is The National Enquirer; 52,000 new titles will be published this year in book form, 80% will never turn a profit; less than 10% of American people use free public libraries on a regular basis; and 60% of adults in the United States receive all their daily knowledge about the world from television.

Instilling a desire for books and reading is a job for both parents and teachers, according to Trelease. He offered suggestions to both groups. Parents should read to their children early and often as well as control the television sets in their homes. Teachers should read aloud to students, provide time for students to read and allow students plenty of informal opportunities to talk about books. Trelease included examples of materials suitable for reading aloud to adolescents: Bob Greene's collection of columns *American Beat*, Paul Aurandt's *Paul Harvey's The Best of Story* and *More of Paul Harvey's The Best of Story*, *Stone Fox* by John R. Gardiner and for any age, Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows*.

Trelease urged all participants to read *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, a U.S. Office of Education report on the state of art of reading in the United States today. There's much evidence to indicate that the more pages, chapters and books children read the better readers they become, stressed Trelease. Yet, according to John Goodlad's findings in *A Place Called School*, across the nation only 3% of class time is spent in actual reading in junior high schools and 2% in senior high schools.

Poetry for Young Adults

Karen Kutiper
Alief Independent School District, Texas

If learning is truly a shared experience, Mel Glenn and Paul Janeczko provide teachers with the substance for sharing. These two secondary English teachers, through their poems and collections of poetry, touch the lives each day of not only their own students but also of countless other young people.

Janeczko, in his remarks, itemized his poetry fantasies. First, people would read more poetry, forgetting their fears of it and their past unpleasant experiences with it. Second, he would somehow undo all the harm done to children and poetry in the past. Third, a public that understood the work of an anthologist would perhaps make his job more appreciated. Finally, his fourth fantasy would be to make some dramatic discovery that would rock the literary world, perhaps a heretofore undiscovered Shakespearean sonnet. Fantasies aside, Janeczko's collections have done much to help young adults realize that "poetry sings of human experience." *The Crystal Image*, *Postcard Poems*, *Don't Forget to Fly*, *Strings* and now *Pocket Poems* are all highly acclaimed collections of accessible poems that capture human experience.

"I can go home again," said Mel Glenn, author of *Class Dismissed*, an award winning collection of original poems. Glenn currently teaches English in the same Brooklyn high school from which he graduated. Using the *Spoon River Anthology* as a philosophical base, Glenn's own collection is a series of sensitive mini-portraits of high school students. Noting that teen-agers today have the same questions and same problems as previous generations, even though times change and fashions change, Glenn told the ALAN audience that the main purpose of his collection was to help students find a clearer image of themselves. He also encouraged teachers to let students write about themselves in order to develop this clearer image. Glenn's first volume of poems will be followed next fall by a new collection, yet untitled, in the same spirit as *Class Dismissed*.

Both Glenn and Janeczko shared with a receptive audience poems that illuminated their comments and made the sharing a learning experience for all.

Teaching Poetry To Young Adults

Nancy J. Johnson
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

One of the biggest frustrations young adults face when dealing with poetry in school is the fear that they won't be able to figure out what the poem means. Overcoming that fear and providing opportunities for young adults to become more involved with poetry as readers and creators was Mike Angelotti's focus in his workshop. With the belief expressed in his opening statements, "What's good in teaching depends upon what is good for you, not necessarily what is good for me," Angelotti shared a variety of books and materials filled with ideas for providing young people with poetry experiences. Recommended materials included:

Whole World Catalogue 2, Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Whole World Catalogue, Teachers & Writers Collaborative

Moving Windows, Jack Collum

Wishes, Lies and Dreams, Kenneth Koch

Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Kenneth Koch

The Haiku Handbook, William Higginson

For Poets, Stephen Dunning

Adolescents, Literature and Work With Youth, J. Pamela Weiner & Ruth Stein

two magazines: *The Writer*
Writers' Digest

Literature for Adolescents – Teaching Poems, Stories, Novels, Plays, Stephen Dunning (out of print, but excellent)

Angelotti expressed the belief that poetry can be taught to most young adults when it centers first on student response and when it consciously integrates reading, writing and discussing. As young adults explore poetry, moving from the known (students' backgrounds of experience) to the unknown (substance and form of the work), they can gain richer understandings as long as the explorations occur in relatively risk-free, shared-risk environments. Students need to feel free to make educated guesses without fear of penalty, and teachers ought to offer a quantity of writing and personal response opportunities for students. If students can begin by making poetry their own, they'll feel less pressured trying to find right and wrong interpretations, or teacher-acceptable interpretations, and can move more confidently to a fuller appreciation of what poetry offers.

M.E. Kerr – The Writer and Her Works

Robert C. Small, Jr.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia

M.E. Kerr, author of such popular novels as *Gentlehands*, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack*, *The Son of Someone Famous*, the most recent *I Stay Near You* and the autobiography, *Me Me Me Me Me*, explored for an attentive audience the influences that led her to become a writer, especially that of her mother. Kerr, or Marijane Meaker as she is known when she is not writing her successful young adult novels, described the persistence with which her mother gathered facts, especially scandalous facts, about her neighbors in the town where she and her family lived. Kerr gave the audience a sample of her mother's running commentary as she and her daughter watched the comings and goings of the town's people at the local movie theater and bar. Later at home, her mother spent hours on the phone giving her own, highly fictionalized account of what she had seen. Though her mother was astounded when her daughter chose to be a writer – telling her something to the effect "You couldn't have gotten it from me. You must take after your father" – Kerr explained her interest in inventing stories and characters as founded in those early gossip-gathering and creating forays with her mother.

When the laughter died down, Charlie Reed, editor of **The ALAN Review**, helped the audience to explore ways in which Kerr's works can be used in the English class. Although recognizing the value of the novels as the basis for promoting interest in reading and class discussions of human problems and concerns, Reed concentrated on Kerr's autogography, *Me Me Me Me Me*, as a part of the literature program and the composition program. In the literature program, she pointed out, this work can provide non-fiction that students can relate to and enjoy since it is by one of their favorite authors and, especially, because it deals with Kerr's childhood and adolescence. In the composition program, it can help students to see that writing is something to be enjoyed and that writing skill does not come spontaneously, but rather develops with practice. In addition, Reed indicated, since Kerr shows her readers how she used people and events from her early life as the raw material of her works, students can discover that they, too, have such raw material in their everyday lives. Reed urged her audience to consider using Kerr's autobiography with students who are uncomfortable with writing. Using her own experience, Reed shared with her audience an example of a story by one of her students who had been a non-writer until helped to overcome her block by reading *Me Me Me Me Me*.

Ouida Sebestyen: The Writer and Her Works

Rosemary Oliphant Ingham
University of Houston - Clear Lake

In giving her audience family background Ouida Sebestyen said that she has five children: a son, Corbin, and four others that she's given wonderful double names reminiscent of her roots in northwest Texas. Her four youngest children are *Words By Heart*, *Far From Home*, *IOU'S* and *On Fire*. Does she have a favorite of these last children? "Yes," she responds, *Far From Home*. After creating *Words By Heart* Sebestyen says that she wasn't sure there was another book. She continues that many authors have only one book in them and she became afraid that this might also be her plight. So when *Far From Home* was born – the desperately wanted child that she wasn't sure could be had – it claimed a special place in her heart.

IOU'S her third book is loosely based on her son, Corbin, his friends and some of their exploits. Corbin really put a $100 bill on his wall at home, and it really disappeared. Reality stops here because the fate of the $100 bill still remains a mystery.

Her 1985 contribution to Adolescent Literature is *On Fire* where she takes the Haney family – minor characters in *Words By Heart* – and creates a story around these people whom she had grown to love and respect in the six years since their first appearance.

Sebestyen prefers to think of her life not as a Cinderella story but as a Senior Elder one since she was 55 when her first book was published. She inspired the would-be authors in the group when she told that her first novel was submitted at the age of 20, and it took 35 years of rejection slips before that first unbelievable acceptance was received.

Ruth Cline, a professor at the University of Colorado, works extensively with middle and senior high school English teachers. Cline shared ideas for using Sebestyen's books in a classroom setting. There were five major areas covered. First, the thematic approach was discussed. All four of the novels deal with survival, prejudice, love and forgiveness and can easily be cornerstones for units dealing with these emotions.

Characterization is definitely a strength of these books. Lena, Salty, Stowe and Sammy, along with their supporting casts, are alive for the reader. Cline suggests not only dealing with the craft of creating character but also delving into the motive behind them.

Ideas for writing assignments included an activity where the writer writes about losing a $100 bill. The *Pegler Clarion-Call* needs unbiased reporters to write articles about the strike and its effect on this mining community. Since every reader of *On Fire* has very definite feelings for one side or the other, some students may choose to write editorials instead of the factual reporting.

A final suggestion was to read aloud from the novels – a suggestion many ALAN participants do already but that is always a welcome reminder.

Teaching The Elements of The Novel With Young Adult Books

Elizabeth A. Belden
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

Bob Small synthesized theories of G. Robert Carlsen (*Books and the Teenaged Reader*), Louise Rosenblatt (*Literature as Exploration* and *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*), and Elliot Eisner (*Aesthetic Modes of Knowing*) in a rationale for using young adult books rather than classics to teach literary elements of plot, characterization, setting and theme.

Most young adults in grades eight through ten read primarily to answer general philosophical questions and only later in grades eleven through twelve begin to read aesthetically. Young adults are able to respond verbally and have more insights about how novels work after reading young adult novels. And young adults are searching for order in the world around them. In addition, according to Roger Farr, former president of the International Reading Association, students must be able to grasp 80 percent of a work's meaning on their own before that work can be used successfully in the classroom. The best quality young adult novels fulfill all of these criteria.

In selecting works to use in the classroom, Small urged his audience to consider popularity first in order to keep students' interest alive. Then consider literary quality, merging the traditional qualities of a good novel with the conventions of young adult novels.

Small proposed the following major considerations for using the young adult novel in the classroom:

1) See the young adult novel as a working model for the adult or classic novel. Whereas the long adult novel may have several well-developed major characters interacting in a multi-stranded plot, the young adult novel is short and usually has one major character, a teenager who engages in one major plot.

2) Concentrate on students' transactions, not on the book itself. Rather than lecturing on literary aspects of novels, approach them indirectly by examining familiar materials such as sports reports or comics, where these elements are more evident.

3) Ask genuine questions, not factual questions that depend on memory, but only those which you cannot answer about a work.

4) Give a variety of imaginative writing assignments that enable students to carry knowledge of the story into the outside world. A newspaper editorial commenting on a problem in the story, or a journal written by the main character could be successful.

Small presented these examples of activities and many more in substantial, well-developed print materials given to each participant. Those who attended his presentation realized that if we are careful WHEN, WHERE and HOW we ask students to look at literature aesthetically, we will select the best young adult novels, using them as a bridge to

more complex works. We will then develop students with positive attitudes toward reading adult novels and increased ability to encounter works aesthetically.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Worth Teaching to Teens

Margaret E. McIntosh
North Texas State University
Denton, Texas

M. Jean Greenlaw and Margaret E. McIntosh opened their session by providing a rationale for using imaginative (science fiction and fantasy) with young people. They discussed using Frank E. Williams' Strategies for Creative Thinking and Feeling as a framework for developing activities based on imaginative literature.

Greenlaw presented a thematic approach to teaching science fiction. Her bibliography included the categories: 1) Search for Other Worlds, 2) Conflict of Cultures, 3) The Potential of Science, 4) Mind Control, 5) Search for Eternal Life, 6) Nuclear Power and 7) Sequels and Series. Specific lessons were suggested for each category.

After briefly discussing the characteristics of high fantasy (secondary worlds, struggle between good and evil, nonrational phenomena, "Everyman" protagonist, etc.) McIntosh presented lessons that related to numerous high fantasy series: "The Chronicles of Prydain" (Alexander), *Red Moon and Black Mountain* (Chant), "The Dark is Rising" (Cooper), "The Earthsea Trilogy" (LeGuin), "The Riddlemaster of Hed" (McKillip), "Damarian" books (McKinley) and "Darkangel" books (Pierce).

Short Stories: How to Choose Them, How to Teach Them

Carole Williams
St. Louis Public Schools
St. Louis, Missouri

The session presented by Donald Gallo began with a discussion of short stories as they have been selected and used in traditional English curriculum. For the most part, selection was based on those stories appearing in approved anthologies and/or collections of stories by several authors or a single author. Titles have not changed much except, in recent years, for the inclusion of a few stories by contemporary authors. These stories traditionally use adult characters, are aimed at adult readers and written by authors whose primary audience is adults. Even the few stories with young people as characters have, until recently, been written by authors who generally write for adult readers.

While the traditional selection of short stories available for classroom use is valuable, Gallo suggested that study of short stories would be enhanced and achieve greater success by using story collections having "student appeal" stories about teens by authors who write for teens. Students need the opportunity to develop a sense of taste through studying good literature pertinent to their interests, needs and experience. A development and maturation of taste requires time and is best achieved through studying a variety of materials.

Gallo feels that teachers' initial purpose in teaching short stories should be to encourage reading enjoyment and discussion of the story rather than critical analysis. Students' responses to stories, positive or negative, lead naturally into discussions of why they experience certain feelings about characters or plot and thus to discovery of the elements which makeup the form and structure of the story. Because the stories are short, many can be used for class study. A variety of sophistication levels of the stories allows teachers to meet varying student ability.

Among the teaching suggestions offered, Gallo encouraged teachers to use their students as resources. Instead of making book reports, students can write responses to the books and stories they read on 4 x 6 cards. Cards can be kept in a file easily accessible to other students. Another possibility is to have students write their own stories. Stories (author's names removed) can be exchanged with students in another class and discussed.

Vera Cleaver's SWEETLY SINGS THE DONKEY

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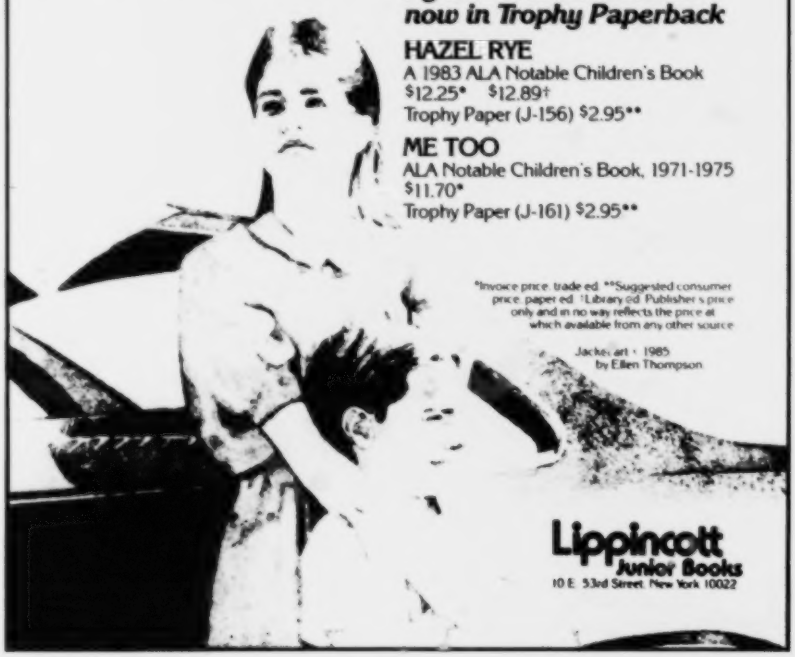

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10 E. 53rd Street, New York 10022

YA Literature as a Model for Composition

Eleanore Tyson
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Young adult literature as a model for composition in the secondary school was the focus of the presentation by Marian Perry, language arts consultant for Region IV Educational Service Center (Houston, Texas), Barbara Samuels of the University of Houston at Clear Lake and Eleanore Tyson. Perry spoke on the aims and modes of literary discourse, reviewed the writing process and discussed such writing techniques as cubing and looping. Samuels and Tyson presented a variety of lessons using popular YA titles to teach figurative language, short story writing, newspaper writing and the writing of legends. Works by such writers as Robert Cormier, M.E. Kerr, Norma Klein and Paul Janeczko were spotlighted. A handout containing fifteen lessons was distributed to each audience member.

Historical Fiction for Young Adults

Betty Carter
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Following Ken Donelson's speech on the history of fiction in young adult literature, Kathryn Lasky, Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier spoke to the ALAN workshop on historical fiction. Ms. Lasky described her desire to show young adults history as it was, rather than as we might have liked it to be, and described her research for *Beyond the Divide*, and the consequent development of cartographer Charles Goodnough and pioneer Meribah Simon. In addition, Ms. Lasky spoke of history as memory, and of the dangers of a nation living without that memory. She told how she wove this theme, of a past that existed but was forgotten, with a present that is, and a future that might be, in her newest release *Home Free*.

Christopher Collier emphasized the teaching aspects of the novels he and his brother co-author. Besides introducing historical events of the American Revolution in *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, Shay's Rebellion in *The Winter Hero*, and the Constitutional Convention in *Jump Ship to Freedom*, these novels also explore universal themes, such as power, or the lack of it. James Lincoln Collier described how the two brother incorporate events and themes into story through a unique collaborative system. Christopher Collier meticulously researches the period of each novel, and then gives his brother an outline of facts and events. James Lincoln Collier fleshes out this background with characters and story, and the two edit the finished product, not only mechanically but also physically by visiting sites and walking, or running, through setting.

While all three authors record and interpret the past, they do so within a framework of the present, respecting not only those who came before, but also those who will follow – their teenage readers of today.

Non-fiction: Writing It and Teaching with It

M. Jean Greenlaw
North Texas State University
Denton, Texas

William Jaspersohn, author of ten informational books for children and young adults, provided the audience with insight into his passion for information. Sharing the impact that an informational book on apples had on him at the age of six, Jaspersohn went on to relate the curiosity that was aroused in him when they took the family dog to the vet and the dog disappeared behind a closed door. What went on behind that door?

The need to "know" has motivated Jaspersohn's research and writing. The success of his books can be attributed to the fact that he does not write about what he thinks children today will be interested in reading, but rather he writes what he cares about.

His interest in people led to such books as *A Day in the Life of a Marine Biologist* and *A Day in the Life of a Veterinarian*, his love of baseball led to *The Ballpark: One Day Behind the Scenes at a Major League Game*. Jaspersohn's passion for his topics and for his craft are conveyed in his writing and in his speaking.

W. Geiger Ellis shared with the audience methods for incorporating informational books into the curriculum.

Presentations on Research

Barbara Samuels
University of Houston - Clear Lake

ALAN Workshop participants share the goal of wanting to help young people become lifetime readers. Reports from two researchers provided another link in that common purpose. What factors influenced those of us who chose careers related to literature and books? Anne Sherrill, a faculty member in the English Department at East Tennessee State University, presented conclusions from reading autobiographies collected by G. Robert Carlsen written by over one thousand would-be and practicing secondary school English teachers and librarians. Perhaps by considering some of their positive experiences with books, Dr. Sherrill suggested, we may better design environments that produce persons who value books.

Talented, enthusiastic teachers reading aloud to make Shakespeare and Chaucer come alive, teachers who showed a special interest in a person's reading, guiding students to books they enjoy without forcing certain works were among the positive memories teachers and librarians had of their secondary school years. Other comments recalled the importance of blocks of time set aside for reading in school, especially when students were given freedom of choice in their reading selections. Teachers and librarians also remembered the importance of being able to share ideas about books with peers, book clubs, alternatives to traditional book reports and classics made relevant. Sherrill also drew conclusions about factors English teachers and librarians remembered negatively. These included teachers forcing certain books and particular interpretations, overanalysis and long, detailed study of literary works, as well as classmates reading aloud. Her presentation reinforced statements about students' reading behavior made earlier by Jim Trelease and several authors.

Adding another perspective on students' preferences in reading, the second research presentation reported on poetry preferences of seventh, eighth and ninth graders. Karen Kuteper, Language Arts Coordinator for the Alief, Texas schools, surprised some teachers when she reported that excluding the most popular poems, students preferred either reading poetry rather than listening to it or listening to poetry while reading it simultaneously. Others were impressed by the fact that many of the same poems are popular with students in elementary, junior and senior high school because preference for poetry is affected by the same factors at all grade levels. Junior high students preferred narrative poetry, especially in combination with humor and familiar experiences. Rhyme was the poetic element which most affected the preferences, while figurative language often interfered with comprehension. Their favorite poem was "Sick" by Shel Silverstein, with other popular poems including "Oh Teddy Bear" by Jack Prelutsky, "Mother Doesn't Want a Dog" by Judith Viorst, "Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast" by John Ciardi, and "The Unicorn" by Shel Silverstein. Kuteper found that the most common source of poetry used by teachers of junior high schools is the poetry anthology. Unfortunately, teachers only occasionally read poetry to their students. Suggesting that ninth graders' preferences indicated the beginnings of signs of maturity in poetry preferences, Dr. Kuteper expressed the hope that findings from her study would encourage teachers in the audience to tempt students into poetry appreciation and enjoyment by sharing with them the works of poets like Shel Silverstein, Judith Viorst and John Ciardi before stretching their abilities with more complex poetry.

New Young Adult Novels Worth the Reading Time

Earl Lomax
David Lipscomb College
Nashville, Tennessee

Ben and Beth Nelms began their presentation by suggesting five misconceptions about young adult literature.

1. All YA books are alike, and all are second rate.
2. YA books are only for reluctant readers and below-average students.
3. YA literature has displaced "classical" fiction.

4. YA books deal only with trivial topics and themes.
5. YA books emphasize plot and emotion and ignore theme.

The two speakers then mentioned several touchstone titles from their English Journal column of the past two years.

Short Stories:
Sixteen, Donald Gallo, editor
A Very Brief Season, Barbara Girion

Poetry:
Strings, Paul Janeczko
Pocket Poems, Paul Janeczko

Humor:
Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush?
Jerry Spinelli
Here's to the Sophomores, P.J. Petersen

Sports:
The Outside Shot, Walter Dean Myers

War:
Grace in the Wilderness: After the Liberation, 1945-48, Aranka Siegal
Star Without a Sky, Leonie Ossowski

International:
Mountain Light, Laurence Yep

Several titles were also mentioned by members of the workshop audience:

Edisto, Padgett Powell
Running Loose, Chris Crutcher
Abby, My Love, Hadley Irwin
Long Time Between Kisses, Sandra Scoppettone
Jackaroo, Cynthia Voigt
Paion, Joan D. Vinge
Summer of the Monkeys, Wilson Rawls
Moves Make the Man, Bruce Brooks
Dead Birds Singing, Marc Talbert
Walk Through Cold Fire, Cin Forshay-Lunsford
Brothers and Keepers, John Wideman
Do Lord Remember Me, Julius Lester

Teaching with Hi-Lo Books

Marian Perry
Region IV Education Service Center
Houston, Texas

Betty Carter first overviewed the history of nonfiction for reluctant readers, beginning with the publication of Bobbs Merrill's "Childhood of America" biography series in 1941. These books featured prominent Americans who grew up with the American dream: Ben Franklin, Daniel Boone and Abigail Adams, for example. The series was characterized as more appropriate for elementary than adolescent readers, as having an almost uniformly dull plot, and as very unlikely to create lifetime readers.

Following this series were glossy visual books aimed primarily at teen-age boys. Although the pictures were lovely, they were not an integral part of the text; the stories themselves were pedestrian and again unlikely to spark an enthusiastic love of reading. Far better was the fiction, beginning with *The Boxcar Children*, 1942, the first in a 30-year series.

In the 1970s, the Fry readability graph, relevance and black and white photographs became formative elements in literature for reluctant readers. Unfortunately, relevance was addressed in language which actually interfered with comprehension as didactic, simplistic solutions to real teen-age problems: shoplifting, pregnancy and runaways, for example.

Current offerings in the field offer more to the problem adolescent reader. Pictures and illustrations are often an integral part of the text. The content tends to hook students into extended reading and resultant gain in reading expertise. Writing in current publications, while on an extremely low readability level, includes far more effective openings, more varied sentence structure, connectives to maintain language flow and definition of words through deliberate context clues, and singular voice. Quality comics, such as the Garfield publications, series books such as *The Dana Fein Series* or *The Race Against Time Series* and continuing title series such as *Sweet Valley High* and *Seniors* were books discussed as representative of these current offerings.

How to Choose the Right Book that Hooks

Douglas Jones
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Geraldine LaRocque's small-group presentation began with an explanation of her paradigm for analyzing the teaching act. She used the paradigm to construct a pattern for teachers to evaluate and select books appropriate for classrooms and curricula in relation to students' needs and interests – to be used in whole-class reading assignments, small-group study and individual student reading. The paradigm follows: (1) Subject matter to this nature, in this amount (which includes both content and time allotted for study), for these purposes, (2) with motivational activities and methodologies of these types, (3) in this situation or setting, and (4) with a teacher with this disposition, this background and these qualities and attitudes (5) produces these patterns of affective and cognitive learning (for some content areas sensory-motor learning would also be important) (6) in students at this level of aptitude, development and maturity, (7) with this kind of experience (which includes both reading experience and life experience) and (8) with this kind of background (which includes physical and psychological health, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds).

Using *Romeo and Juliet* as an example text, Dr. LaRocque took her audience through the paradigm, emphasizing level 5 ("produces these patterns of affective and cognitive learning") as the culmination of teacher and student criteria. She further elaborated on student factors to take into consideration when choosing books for students: (1) age, (2) interests, (3) reading skill, (4) reading background, (5) readability of book, (6) sex, (7) socio-economic background, (8) intelligence, (9) maturity, (10) purpose and (11) format.

Censorship: The Writer and the Teacher

Alan M. McLeod
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Censorship affects all of us. Often it reflects struggle for control – efforts to determine what individuals will think. If we work in classrooms or libraries long enough, we're bound to encounter efforts at censorship; some efforts will be subtle, others overt. To help us deal effectively with would-be censors, we were given excellent guidance by representatives of two groups frequently affected: the writer and the teacher.

Norma Klein, author of *Mom, the Wolf Man and Me* and *Snapshots*, among others, stated she is among the most banned writers of young adult literature because her readers are ardent and she tries to present them with truths of life. She noted that self-appointed censors are scary; small, noisy minorities dictating to society at large with the result that as a society we're forgetting what we learned from McCarthyism in the 1950s. She discussed the PEN organization and the Freedom to Read fund, and told of her efforts in Vancouver when her novel, *It's OK If You Don't Love Me*, came under attack. What alarmed her was less that the censor had not read the book but that no member of the School Board, which ordered its removal from junior high libraries, had read it.

Klein called for those against censorship to band together just as the censors have. If we don't protect the right to read, who will?

Jim Davis, Professor of English at Ohio University, continued Klein's theme. Davis, a member of NCTE's Committee Against Censorship, amid allusions to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," described closet censors and open censors. He noted that self-censorship among teachers and librarians is substantial, unfortunately often relying on someone else's opinion. He sees censorship as casting a chill on public schools. He related several helpful steps taken. He noted that to speak out against censorship is costly, but remaining silent is more costly.

An Opinion

THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD

John S. Simmons
Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

Now, in the mid-eighties, we find ourselves in the van of yet another educational movement: This time, it is for the upgrading of the curriculum at all levels, the demand for *quality*. Since much of the impetus is legislatively induced, we who have been in the profession for awhile recognize several aspects of obtuseness, insensitivity and wrongheadness in much of the thinking which propels this legislation. But that's not the matter I would pose here; it is my concern over the future of the young adult novel in the politically-[illegible]ected days to come.

In the recently published report of the Carnegie Commission (*The High School Today*), there is a call for a return to the serious study of literature in the nation's high schools. Clearly, this is an aspect of the "return to quality" movement mentioned above. As classroom teachers, supervisors and English Educators gear up to play their role in this upgrading process, the issue of what role young adult fiction will be allowed to play must be faced. A squib from the November 1984 edition of *Council-Grams* (NCTE) provides, at least to me, one set of implications. It reads:

> Perhaps one predictable consequence of the nationally-publicized movement to restore excellence to our schools is the traditional attempt to identify those literary works that all high school students should presumable read. Last August, in an informal survey of over 300 people – half of whom were high school teachers, William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the humanities, gathered in a mixed bag of choices.
>
> In one sense, the choices were not surprising. By a very clear margin, respondents identified the top two selections as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, two works almost invariably included in anthologies of literature at the high school level. Nor were the remainder of the top ten choices unfamiliar: *Huckleberry Finn*, the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, the Bible, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, Plato's *Republic*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and *The Scarlett Letter*. It may, however, be significant that only one work written in this century, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, made the top ten. Many of the next 20 choices can also be found in the English curriculum for high school students, a reflection of the input of half of the respondents.
>
> Is the Readiness All?
>
> Like any other such list, the compilation is easier than its justification. The literary quality of the books selected being beyond dispute, the more relevant question is whether the works are all appropriate for all high school students. James E. Miller, Jr., a past president of NCTE, conceded that the books are certainly marvelous reading but "for teachers confronted with inner-city students, you don't just throw Shakespeare at them." (LA Times, August 12, 1984)

Take a close look at the list of works in the second paragraph. Nary a young adult novel, as might well be expected. Thus my question, indeed my deep concern: How will teachers in secondary school English classrooms be able to defend their use of adolescent fiction which is not considered "real literature" by many critics both in and outside the profession? Almost thirty years ago, Frank Jennings

wrote an article titled, "Literature for Adolescents -Pap or Protein" for the **English Journal**. You can guess what the thrust of *that* one was. My colleague Dwight Burton was editor of E.J. then and has told me often since of the tremendous amount of correspondence he received from readers who both opposed and supported Jennings's position. I would contend that there are large numbers of concerned individuals to whom that issue is still a hot one. In the days to come, the pressure will be intense on teachers to justify their use of young adult novels in terms of their literary quality. This will be particularly true of those who teach in middle schools and junior high schools, who teach average and above average students, and who would use YA novels for all-class reading and study. Unlike their senior high counterparts, they don't have the literary scholarship of the centuries to fall back on when the buzzards descend. Later in this piece, I will offer them some modest proposals.

The young adult novel faces another challenge in the immediate future. It's an old one, and it's coming on stronger than ever in the year of the post-Reagan landslide. You guessed it: repressive censorship.

The Jerry Falwell Moral Majority crowd is pretty open in its statement of concern of the direction of public education in our time. The term "secular humanism" fills the air, and it is my prediction that we will hear it more stridently now that Reagan has been returned so resoundingly to the White House. One of the chief targets of Falwellian education critics is the choice of books teachers and schools make for classroom and library. The young adult novels being placed in the hands of early adolescents are almost surely to draw their hot-eyed attention. The fact is that Phyllis Schlafly's *Eagle Forum* is already hard at work throughout the country combing through materials currently taught in public school curricula. There have already been some direct encounters, one in Minneapolis in 1983 over *Romeo and Juliet*. The November 1984 election provided the catalyst for the staging of many more vigilante raids.

My deep concern for the young adult novel in an era of fanatical curricular repression emanates from two precepts. First is that the YA novel isn't as sweet and wholesome as it used to be. Over the past 15 years, I have talked to countless middle school/junior high teachers who are genuinely troubled by the flaunting of taboos by current writers of young adult fiction. Since the early novels of Hinton, Zindel, Blume, *et al* burst on the scene in the late 1960s, the floodgates have opened wide in the use of "controversial subjects" in the novels written primarily for a teenage reading audience. More than ever, teachers of young adult fiction must be wary in their choice of novels for study. They must be able to reconcile literary quality and realism with questionable content. And, I suspect, the overlords of the Moral Majority/*Eagle Forum* legions are keeping their eyes open, too.

My second precept is that young adult novels, particularly those written in the past ten years, are hard to defend as works of lasting literary merit. Consider this excerpt from the 1982 NCTE publication, *The Students' Right To Know:*

> *Censorship attacks good books, not poor books. One of the interesting characteristics of the current tensions between the schools and some parents is that the complaints involve generally very good materials. Although the term "obscene" is used quite frequently in complaints by parents about such books as are listed below, it is very doubtful if these books are, in fact, legally obscene ---*
>
> *An examination of five surveys of objections to learning materials in the schools made between 1965 and 1981 show that some 600 book titles were the objects of complaint. Of these, approximately 22 appeared most often. The 22 most frequently cited titles are the following:*

1. **The Catcher in the Rye**, J.D. Salinger
2. **The Grapes of Wrath**, John Steinbeck
3. **Of Mice and Men**, John Steinbeck
4. **Nineteen Eighty-Four**, George Orwell
5. **Lord of the Flies**, William Golding
6. **Go Ask Alice**, Anonymous
7. **Black Like Me**, John Griffin
8. **Brave New World**, Aldous Huxley
9. **To Kill a Mockingbird**, Harper Lee
10. **One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich**, Alexander Solzhenitsn
11. **Love Story**, Erich Segal
12. **Manchild in the Promised Land**, Claude Brown
13. **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest**, Kenneth Kesey

14. **The Scarlett Letter,** Nathaniel Hawthorne
15. **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,** Mark Twain
16. **Forever,** Judy Blume
17. **The Learning Tree,** Gordon Parks
18. **A Separate Peace,** John Knowles
19. **The Diary of a Young Girl,** Anne Frank
20. **Deliverance,** James Dickey
21. **The Good Earth,** Pearl S. Buck
22. **Slaughterhouse-Five,** Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Once again, go over that list. Only *Go Ask Alice* and the Judy Blume novel are commonly considered as young adult fiction. The bottom line is, it's much easier to defend the redeeming literary value of a Steinbeck novel to an enraged parent or to an *Eagle Forum* raiding party than it would be the works of a Blume, Cormier or M.E. Kerr. Let's face it: Shakespeare, Chaucer, Faulkner and Eugene O'Neill can get away with stuff that the YA writer simply can't. The reasons for this double standard are many and not really germane to my thesis. It's just the way things are.

One of the factors that makes the censorship of literature study in general and young adult fiction in particular so serious is the current predilection of teachers, librarians and administrators to cave in to outside pressure. A chilling study by the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) done in cooperation with the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of American Publishers reports from Washington in the Associated Press:

> Efforts to censor books occur in a fifth of the nation's schools each year, succeed in half the cases and often are initiated by teachers or principals seeking to avoid trouble, a study released Thursday says.
>
> The study – the most extensive of its kind ever undertaken – found precensorship common in schools that have been the scene of book controversies. Having gone through one battle, principals try to omit books that might cause ripples, the report said.
>
> "Censorship pressures on books and other learning materials in the public schools are real, nationwide and growing," the study concluded.
>
> In all, 1,891 librarians, principals and superintendents participated in the study made by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development . . .
>
> The surveyed educators listed more than 200 books that were subjected to censorship pressures in 1980. The books ranged from the American Heritage Dictionary to *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, Wilt Chamberlain's autobiography, *Stuart Little*, a children's book by E.B. White, and such novels as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. . .
>
> The survey found that schools often gave in quickly when a parent or someone else raised questions.
>
> "In exactly half of 500 challenges specified, the challenged material was altered, restricted or removed prior to a formal review," the report said.
>
> On the other hand, the report did not argue that the selection of books was not a legitimate area of parents' concern.
>
> Often, the challenges come from within the school. "Perhaps one of the most startling findings of the survey was that librarians named school personnel (teachers, administrators and librarians) as initiating over 30 percent of the challenges cited," the report said.

As Pogo once prophetically proclaimed, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

There is no magic formula for dispelling the two obstacles to the widespread use and study of young adult fiction in immediate future years. The teachers who have the courage and academic integrity to do so, however, need some support. My main suggestion is that this journal do a great deal more *critical* reviewing of recently published young adult novels. This is *not* a complaint about current reviews; it is simply a warning that good novels must be strongly praised and poor ones be candidly criticized. There are so many YA novels flooding the market today that it would be virtually impossible for classroom teachers to read an adequate number with adequate

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YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: SUGGESTED READINGS FOR BRIDGING THE GAP

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Young adult literature, a bridge between children's and adult literature, provides readers with pleasurable reading experiences. This literature also can become a vehicle for teaching new literary concepts, for exposing students to various types of literature and for broadening the experiences of readers. Most importantly, young adult literature leads students to an understanding of the universality of literature. The following titles are grouped for specific teaching purposes. As illustrated by these titles and by the suggested purposes, young adult literature can be incorporated throughout the curriculum from middle school to college. Such utilization of young adult literature should help lead students to a future where reading is both meaningful and enjoyable.

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Plot

Robert Lipsyte. **One Fat Summer.** Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-14306-9. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-24393-4.

Robert Cormier. **After the First Death.** Pantheon, 1974. ISBN: 0-394-94595-4. Dell, 1975. ISBN: 0-440-94459-7, LFL.

John Neufeld. **Edgar Allen.** S.G. Phillips, 1968. ISBN: 0-87599-149-1. New American Library, 1969. ISBN: 0-451-11801-4.

Robert Newton Peck. **A Day No Pigs Would Die.** Knopf, 1972. ISBN: 0-394-48235-2. Dell. ISBN: 0-440-92083-3, LFL.

Lois Duncan. **Killing Mr. Griffin.** Little Brown, 1978. ISBN: 0-316-19549-9. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-94515-1, LFL.

Point of View

Paul Zindel. **The Pigman.** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-06-026827-1. Bantam, 1981. ISBN: 0-553-14657-2.

Barbara Wersba. **Run Softly, Go Fast.** Atheneum, 1970. LC-70-115089. Bantam, 1972. ISBN: 0-553-13429-9.

Daniel Keyes. **Flowers for Algernon.** Harcourt, 1966. ISBN: 0-15-131510-8. Bantam, 1970. ISBN: 0-553-12498-6.

Maia Wojciechowska. **Don't Play Dead Before You Have To.** Harper, 1970. ISBN: 0-06-026568-X. Dell, 1971. ISBN: 0-440-92105-8, LFL.

Robert Cormier. **I Am the Cheese.** Pantheon, 1977. ISBN: 0-394-83462-3. Dell, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-94060-5, LFL.

Theme

M.E. Kerr. **Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack.** Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-06-023151-3. Dell, 1973. ISBN: 0-440-92030-2, LFL.

Glendon Swarthout. **Bless the Beasts and Children.** Doubleday, 1970. LC-69-94331. Pocket Books, 1974. ISBN: 0-671-47037-X.

Maia Wojciechowska. **Don't Play Dead Before You Have To.** Harper, 1970. ISBN: 0-06-026568-X. Dell, 1971. ISBN: 0-440-92105-8, LFL.

S.E. Hinton. **The Outsiders.** Collins, 1977. ISBN: 0-00-671427-7. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-96769-4, LFL.

Judy Blume. **It's Not the End of the World.** Bradbury, 1972. ISBN: 0-02-7811050-8. Bantam, 1977. ISBN: 0-553-13628-3, Y13628-3.

Setting

Phyllis McKillip. **The Night Gift.** Atheneum, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-30508-7. Aladdin, 1980. ISBN: 0-68970470-4, A-99.

Robert O'Brien. **Z for Zachariah.** Atheneum, 1975. ISBN: 0-689-30442-0. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-99901-4.

Mildred Taylor. **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.** Dial, 1976. ISBN: 0-8037-7437-7. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-20444-0.

Anne McCaffrey. **Dragonsong.** Atheneum, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-30507-9. Bantam, 1977. ISBN: 0-553-14204-6.

Character Development

S.E. Hinton. **Tex.** Collins, 1977. ISBN: 0-00-671427-7. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-96769-4, LFL.

Isabelle Holland. **The Man Without a Face.** Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-397-31211-3, JBL-J, LSC-9. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-96097-5, LFL.

Paula Danziger. **Pistachio Prescription.** Delacorte, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-06936-X. Dell, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-96895-X, LFL.

Richard Bradford. **Red Sky at Morning.** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-397-00549-0. Pocket Books, 1974. ISBN: 0-671-46268-7.

Literary Techniques

Katherine Paterson. **Jacob Have I Loved (Allusions).** Harper, 1980. ISBN: 0-690-04079-2. Gollancz, 1981. ISBN: 0-575-02961-7.

Glendon Swarthout. **Bless the Beasts and Children (Flashback).** Doubleday, 1970. LC-79-94331. Pocket Books, 1974. ISBN: 0-671-47037-X.

Lloyd Alexander. **The Prydain Series (Figurative Language).** Holt, 1964. ISBN: 0-03-089821-8. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-90702-0, LFL.

Elizabeth Speare. **The Witch of Blackbird Pond.** Houghton Mifflin, 1958. ISBN: 0-395-07114-3. Dell, 1972. ISBN: 0-440-49596-2, YB.

Paul Zindel. **The Pigman (Symbolism).** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-06-026827-1. Bantam, 1981. ISBN: 0-553-14657-2.

Susan Cooper. **The Dark Is Rising Series.** Atheneum, 1973. ISBN: 0-689-30317-3. Aladdin, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-70420-8, A-51.

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Literary Style

S.E. Hinton. **The Outsiders.** Collins, 1977. ISBN: 0-00-671427-7. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-96769-4, LFL.

Barbara Wersba. **Run Softly, Go Fast.** Atheneum, 1970. LC-70-115089. Bantam, 1972. ISBN: 0-553-13429-9.

Tunes for a Small Harmonica. Harper, 1976. ISBN: 0-06-026372-5. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-99173-0.

Maia Wojciechowska. **Don't Play Dead Before You Have To.** Harper, 1970. ISBN: 0-06-026568-X. Dell, 1971. ISBN: 0-440-92105-8, LFL.

Padgett Powell. **Edisto.** Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984.

TYPES OF LITERATURE

The Problem Novel

Judy Blume. **It's Not the End of the World.** Bradbury, 1972. ISBN: 0-02-711050-8. Dell, 1982. ISBN: 0-440-94140-7, LFL.

Robin Brancato. **Winning.** Knopf, 1977. ISBN: 0-394-83581-6. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-13693-3.

Lois Lowry. **A Summer to Die.** Houghton Mifflin, 1977. ISBN: 0-395-25338-1. Bantam, 1979. ISBN: 0-553-13693-3.

Jean Renvoize. **A Wild Thing.** Little Brown, 1971. LC 70-152906. Bantam, 1972.

Marilyn Harris. **Hatter Fox.** Random House, 1973. ISBN: 0-394-48514-9. Ballantine, 1983. ISBN: 0-345-30026-2.

Chaim Potok. **The Chosen.** Heinemann, 1977. ISBN: 0-434-59600-0. Fawcett, 1978. ISBN: 0-449-24200-5.

Adventure Romance

Margaret Craven. **I Heard the Owl Call My Name.** Doubleday, 1973. ISBN: 0-385-02586-6. Dell, 1974. ISBN: 0-440-34369-0.

Robert Lipsyte. **The Contender.** Harper, 1967. ISBN: 0-06-023920-4. Bantam, 1969. ISBN: 0-553-14690-4.

Scott O'Dell. **The Island of the Blue Dolphins.** Houghton Mifflin, 1960. ISBN: 0-395-06962-9. Dell, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-94000-1, LFL.

Lloyd Alexander. **The Kestrel.** Dutton, 1982. ISBN: 0-525-45110-2, 01063-320. Dell, 1983. ISBN: 0-440-94393-0, LFL.

Love Romance

M.E. Kerr. **If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?** Harper, 1973. ISBN: 0-06-023149-1. Dell, 1974. ISBN: 0-440-94320-5, LFL.

Herman Raucher. **Summer of '42.** Putnam, 1971. LC 76-146106. Dell, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-18348-0

Erich Segal. **Love Story.** Harper, 1970. ISBN: 0-06-013826-2. Avon, 1977. ISBN: 0-380-01760-1, 62158-4.

Mildred Lee. **The People Therein.** Houghton Mifflin, 1980. ISBN: 0-395-29434-7. New American Library, 1982. ISBN: 0-451-11355-1.

Adventure

Peter Benchley. **Jaws.** Doubleday, 1974. ISBN: 0-385-04771-1. Bantam, 1975. ISBN: 0-553-20465-3.

Sheila Burnford. **The Incredible Journey.** Little Brown, 1961. ISBN: 0-316-11714-5. Bantam, 1977. ISBN: 0-553-10220-6,13075-7.

Harry Mazer. **Snowbound.** Delacorte, 1973. LC 72-7958. Dell, 1975. ISBN: 0-440-96134-3, LFL.

D.R. Sherman. **The Lion's Paw.** Doubleday, 1975. ISBN: 0-385-07545-6. Cassell, 1974. ISBN: 0-304-29410-1.

Westerns

Jack Schaefer. **Shane.** Houghton Mifflin, 1954. ISBN: 0-395-07090-2. Bantam, 1980. ISBN: 0-553-14475-8.

Oliver LaFarge. **Laughing Boy.** Buccaneer, 1981. ISBN: 0-89966-367-2. New American Library, 1971. ISBN: 0-451-51769-5, CE1769.

Larry McMurty. **The Last Picture Show.** Dial, 1966. 66-22587. Penguin, 1979. ISBN: 0-14-005183-X.

Richard Bradford. **Red Sky at Morning.** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-397-00549-0. Pocket Books, 1974. ISBN: 0-671-46268-7.

Mysteries

Lois Duncan. **Killing Mr. Griffin.** Little Brown, 1978. ISBN: 0-316-19549-9. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-94515-1, LFL.

Ellen Raskin. **The Westing Game.** Dutton, 1978. ISBN: 0-525-42320-6, 01068-320. Avon, 1980. ISBN: 0-380-49346-2, 63461-9.

John Rowe Townsend. **The Intruder.** Harper, 1970. ISBN: 0-397-31126-5, LBL-J. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-94077-X.

Jay Bennett. **The Killing Tree.** Watts, 1972. ISBN: 0-531-02559-4. Avon, 1979. ISBN: 0-380-44289-2, 56259.

Science Fiction

John Christopher. **The White Mountains.** Macmillan, 1967. ISBN: 0-02-718360-2. Collier, 1970. ISBN: 0-02-042710-7.

Robert O'Brien. **Z for Zachariah.** Atheneum, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-30442-0. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-99901-4.

Fantasy

Lloyd Alexander. **The Prydain Series.** Holt, 1964. ISBN: 0-03-089821-8. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-90702-0, LFL.

Susan Cooper. **The Dark Is Rising Series.** Atheneum, 1973. ISBN: 0-689-30317-3. Aladdin, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-70420-8, A-51.

Anne McCaffrey. **Dragonsong Series.** Atheneum, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-30507-9. Bantam, 1977. ISBN: 0-553-14204-6.

Phyllis McKillip. **The Riddle-Master Series.** Atheneum, 1976. ISBN: 0-689-30545-1. Ballantine, 1978. ISBN: 0-345-28881-5.

Autobiographical Writing

Anne Frank. **The Diary of a Young Girl.** Modern Library, 1958. ISBN: 0-394-60451-2.

Bette Greene. **The Summer of My German Soldier.** Dial, 1973. ISBN: 0-8037-8321-3. Collins, 1977. ISBN: 0-14-030985-3.

Gale Sayers. **I Am Third.** Viking, 1970. ISBN: 0-670-38977-3. Bantam. ISBN: 0-553-12865-5.

Ron Luciano. **The Umpire Strikes Back.** Bantam, 1982. ISBN: 0-553-05010-9. Bantam. ISBN: 0-553-23084-0.

Minority Literature

Cam Hubert. **Dreamspeaker.** Irwin, Clark, 1978. ISBN: 0-7720-1220-2. Avon, 1981. ISBN: 0-380-56622-2, 56622-2.

Hal Borland. **When the Legends Die.** Harper, 1963. ISBN: 0-397-00303-X. Bantam, 1972. 0-553-12593-1, 13507-4.

William Armstrong. **Sounder.** Harper, 1969. ISBN: 0-06-020143-6. Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-06-440020-4.

Gordon Parks. **The Learning Tree.** Harper, 1963. 63-16528. Fawcett, 1978. ISBN: 0-449-23855-5.

Mildred Taylor. **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.** Dial, 1976. ISBN: 0-8037-7437-7. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-20444-0.

Sharon Bell Mathis. **Listen for the Fig Tree.** Viking, 1974. ISBN: 0-670-43016-1.

Women's Literature

Barbara Wersba. **Tunes for a Small Harmonica.** Harper, 1976. ISBN: 0-06-026372-5. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-99173-0.

Isabelle Holland. **Of Love and Death and Other Journeys.** Harper, 1975. ISBN: 0-397-31566-X, JBL-J. Dell, 1977. ISBN: 0-440-96547-0, LFL.

Katherine Paterson. **Jacob Have I Loved.** Harper, 1980. ISBN: 0-690-04079-2. Gollancz, 1981. ISBN: 0-575-02961-7.

APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

Sociological Approach

William Armstrong. **Sounder.** Harper, 1969. ISBN: 0-06-020143-6. Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-06-440020-4.

John Knowles. **A Separate Peace.** Macmillan, 1960. ISBN: 0-02-564840-3. Dell, 1962. ISBN: 0-385-28886-7.

Elizabeth Speare. **Witch of Blackbird Pond.** Houghton Mifflin, 1958. ISBN: 0-395-07114-3. Dell, 1972. ISBN: 0-440-49596-2, YB.

Maureen Daly. **Seventeenth Summer.** Dodd, 1983. ISBN: 0-686-48061-9. Archway, 1968. ISBN: 0-671-44386-0.

Padgett Powell. **Edisto.** Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984.

Archetypal Approach

Robert Lipsyte. **One Fat Summer.** Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-14306-9. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-24393-4.

Phyllis McKillip. **The Fourteen Beasts of Eld.** Atheneum, 1974. ISBN: 0-689-30434-X. Avon, 1975. ISBN: 0-380-00480-1, 62505-9.

Hal Borland. **When the Legends Die.** Harper, 1963. ISBN: 0-397-00303-X. Bantam, 1972. ISBN: 0-553-12593-1, 13507-4.

Psychological Approach

Barbara Wersba. **Run Softly, Go Fast.** Atheneum, 1970. LC 70-115089. Bantam, 1972. ISBN: 0-553-13429-9.

M.E. Kerr. **Gentlehands.** Harper, 1978. ISBN: 0-06-023176-9. Bantam, 1981. ISBN: 0-553-12577-X.

Isabelle Holland. **The Man Without a Face.** Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-397-31211-3. Dell, 1980. ISBN: 0-440-96097-5, LFL.

Formalist Approach

Robert Lipsyte. **The Contender.** Harper, 1967. ISBN: 0-06-023920-4. Bantam, 1969. ISBN: 0-553-14690-4.

Robert Cormier. **The Chocolate War.** Pantheon, 1974. ISBN: 0-394-94595-4. Dell, 1975. ISBN: 0-440-94459-7, LFL.

Richard Bradford. **Red Sky at Morning.** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-397-00549-0. Pocket Books, 1974. ISBN: 0-671-46268-7.

Affective Approach

Scott O'Dell. **Island of the Blue Dolphins.** Houghton Mifflin, 1960. ISBN: 0-395-06962-9. Dell, 1978. ISBN: 0-440-94000-1, LFL.

Norma Klein. **Mom, the Wolfman, and Me.** Pantheon, 1972. ISBN: 0-394-92470-3. Avon, 1977. ISBN: 0-380-01725-3, 55020-2.

John Neufeld. **Edgar Allen.** Phillips, 1968. ISBN: 0-87599-149-1. New American Library, 1969. ISBN: 0-451-11801-4.

Virginia Hamilton. **Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush.** Putnam, 1982. ISBN: 0-399-20894-1. Avon, 1983. ISBN: 0-380-64824-5.

INTRODUCTIONS TO HISTORICAL PERIODS

Elizabeth Speare. **Witch of Blackbird Pond.** Houghton Mifflin, 1958. ISBN: 0-395-07114-3. Dell, 1972. ISBN: 0-440-49596-2. YB.

Calico Captive. Houghton Mifflin, 1957. ISBN: 0-395-07112-7.

Edna Forbes. **Johnny Tremain.** Houghton Mifflin, 1943. ISBN: 0-395-08370-2. Dell, 1969. ISBN: 0-440-94250-0, LFL.

Irene Hunt. **Across Five Aprils.** Heinemann, 1969. SBN: 435-12127-8. Ace, 1982. ISBN: 0-441-00316-8.

William Armstrong. **Sounder.** Harper, 1969. ISBN: 0-06-020143-6. Harper, 1972. ISBN: 0-06-440020-4.

Mildred Taylor. **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.** Dial, 1976. ISBN: 0-8037-7437-7. Bantam, 1978. ISBN: 0-553-20444-0.

Robert Newton Peck. **A Day No Pigs Would Die.** Knopf, 1972. ISBN: 0-394-48235-2. Dell. ISBN: 0-440-92083-3, LFL.

Katherine Paterson. **Jacob Have I Loved.** Harper, 1980. ISBN: 0-690-04079-2. Gollancz, 1981. ISBN: 0-575-02961-7.

John Knowles. **A Separate Peace.** Macmillan, 1960. ISBN: 0-02-564840-3. Dell, 1962. ISBN: 0-385-28886-7.

Richard Bradford. **Red Sky at Morning.** Harper, 1968. ISBN: 0-397-00549-0. Pocket Books. 1974. ISBN: 0-671-46268-7.

Maureen Daly. **Seventeenth Summer.** Dodd, 1983. ISBN: 0-686-48061-9. Archway, 1968. ISBN: 0-671-44386-0.

Nat Hentoff. **I'm Really Dragged But Nothing Gets Me Down.** Simon & Schuster, 1968. LC 68-29762. Dell, 1969. ISBN: 0-440-93988-7, LFL.

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TO EXPLORE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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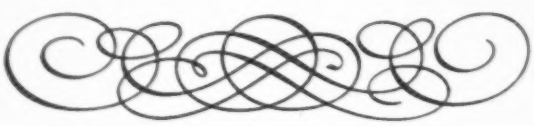

YA BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM

Using RACHEL'S LEGACY To Expand Life-Role Options

Christy Hammer
Lincoln, Nebraska

Teachers use adolescent literature for a variety of reasons. One reason is to increase students' understanding of themselves. *Rachel's Legacy* by Hila Colman is an excellent novel for an interdisciplinary approach relating literature, linguistics, economics and history to heighten students' awareness and understanding of themselves and of the sex roles of the society in which they live.

Although students hear about equal opportunities for men and women, they often lack an understanding of their own viewpoints, hidden prejudices and stereotypes. Adolescents, by their own lack of understanding, may be closing off options for themselves. Examining roles of men and women may help them to understand how strict adherence to traditional roles can place economic, social and emotional limits on people. Sexism in language also limits people, socially as well as economically.

Some research studies show that the more traditionally students see sex roles, the more likely they are to follow those traditional patterns; the female is seen as submissive, whereas the male is dominant. According to a study conducted by Jorgensen and Alexander, a high percentage of young adolescent girls who hold the highly traditional view of sex roles become pregnant (p. 131).

Many people feel that the traditional roles are very limiting for females; others emphasize that the traditional expectations are even more restrictive for males. Males often receive little encouragement for expression of feelings of concern or responsibility toward others. They are encouraged to be competitive, independent and physically strong; whereas females are expected to express a lack of self-confidence and to show helplessness. The pressures of meeting the stereotypical image of masculinity may be as difficult for males as meeting the feminine image is for women. Discussion of the roles of both men and women will be included in this unit.

Literature offers the perfect vehicle with which to examine sex roles in literature as well as in life. Initiating a discussion of stereotypical behavior in literature will help students better understand sex roles in real life.

"X" by Lois Gould describes a couple's attempt to raise a child free from sex role stereotypes. This short story is an excellent beginning for the unit since it alerts students to many stereotypes and biases existing in our society. It also serves as a vehicle for discussion of the sex role expectations by which students are being raised. The sentence stems "Nice boys . . ." and "Nice girls . . ." lend themselves to brainstorming about sex roles.

After reading "X" students participate in a group activity to heighten their awareness of economic facts regarding salaries, jobs, roles and education of men and women. Each fact taken from the *Equals "Startling Statements"* (see Figure 1) is put in the form of a question on top of an 11 x 13 piece of paper. Each student solicits his/her classmates for answers to the questions. Their answers are then compared to the correct answers provided by the teacher.

Several self analysis or androgyny instruments are available to help students determine whether they see people as individuals or in sex role stereotypes. Students take one of these tests and are made aware of the results. These scores need not be shared with the class since the purpose of the instrument is for students to gain a better self-understanding.

All of these activities lead up to the key element in the unit, reading *Rachel's Legacy*. Because many

Figure 1

EQUALS STARTLING STATEMENTS

1. How many women are among the 1,390 living members of the National Academy of Sciences?
2. Women are 52% of the population; what percent are they of the U.S. engineering force?
3. What is the average yearly salary offer to a student with a 1983 bachelor's degree in petroleum engineering?
4. What is the average yearly salary offer to a student with a 1983 bachelor's degree in the humanities?
5. Of the 27,378 California secondary students taking computer programming in 1982, what percent were female?
6. The male labor force increased by 21% from 1970-1980. What was the increase for females?
7. The median annual earnings for full-time working women in 1983 was $13,156. What was the median for full-time working men?
8. In the 1982 National Assessment of Educational Progress sample, 32% of white students had taken 3 math courses. What was the percent for black students?
9. In 1978, the average 13-year-old Hispanic student answered 45% of the math questions on the National Assessment exam correctly. What was that average in 1982?
10. What percent of boards of directors of Fortune 500 companies are women?
11. Nationwide, what percent of women are skilled craft workers?
12. In 1928, women were 55% of elementary school principals; what percent were they in 1981?
13. What percent of California's elementary and secondary teachers are Hispanic?
14. What percent of medical degrees awarded in 1982 were earned by minorities?
15. What percent of secretarial jobs are held by women?
16. In 1972, high-technology industries employed 6% of the workforce. What was the percent in 1982?
17. In 1971, 11 women served in the United States Congress. How many are there today?
18. If you were facing South, then turned 180° to your right, what direction would you be facing?

What percent of California sixth graders answered a similar item correctly?

ANSWERS TO STARTLING STATEMENTS

(Letters in parentheses indicate source)

1. 49 (a)
2. 6% (b)
3. $31,044 (c)
4. $16,560 (d)
5. 37% (e)
6. 47% (h)
7. $19,916 (m)
8. 13% (j)
9. 52% (i)
10. 2.8% (k)
11. 6% (f)
12. 18% (l)
13. 5.9% (g)
14. 10.7% (h)
15. 99% (f)
16. 6% (c)
17. 23 or 4.3% (n)
18. about 36% (o)

SOURCES

(a) Office of the Home Secretary, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.
(b) *Woman Engineer*. Vol. 4, No. 1, Fall 1983.
(c) *Manpower Comments*. Washington, D.C.: Scientific Manpower Commission, Vol. 20, No. 4, May 1983.
(d) *Manpower Comments*. Vol. 20, No. 7, September 1983.
(e) *Student Enrollment by Course: California Basic Education Data Systems, 1982-1983*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, April 1983.
(f) *Economic Notes: Focus on Women Workers*. New York: Labor Research Associates, Vol. 50, No. 2, February 1982.
(g) *Education Week*. August 24, 1983.
(h) *Manpower Comments*. Vol. 20, No. 5, June 1983.
(i) *The Third Mathematics Assessment of the National Assessment: Results, Trends, and Issues*. Denver, CO: NAEP, Education Commission of the States, April 1983.
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(l) *Manpower Comments*. Vol. 19, No. 3, April 1982.
(m) *News: U.S. Department of Labor*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 1, 1983.
(n) *California Women*. Sacramento, CA: California Commission on the Status of Women, August 1, 1983.
(o) *Student Achievement in California Schools: 1982-1983 Annual Report*. Sacramento, CA: California Assessment Program, California State Department of Education, 1983.

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Figure 2

MODIFIED BSRI

Look over the following characteristics. Then put a mark before each characteristic, using "E" for the characteristics that best describe Esther, an "I" for Ida and a "R" for Rachel.

____ 1. Self-reliant
____ 2. Yielding
____ 3. Helpful
____ 4. Defends own beliefs
____ 5. Cheerful
____ 6. Moody
____ 7. Independent
____ 8. Shy
____ 9. Conscientious
____ 10. Athletic
____ 11. Affectionate
____ 12. Theatrical
____ 13. Assertive
____ 14. Flatterable
____ 15. Happy
____ 16. Has strong personality
____ 17. Loyal
____ 18. Unpredictable
____ 19. Forceful
____ 20. Feminine
____ 21. Reliable
____ 22. Analytical
____ 23. Sympathetic
____ 24. Jealous
____ 25. Has leadership qualities
____ 26. Sensitive to the needs of others
____ 27. Truthful
____ 28. Willing to take risks
____ 29. Understanding
____ 30. Secretive
____ 31. Makes decisions easily
____ 32. Compassionate
____ 33. Sincere
____ 34. Self-sufficient
____ 35. Eager to soothe hurt feelings
____ 36. Conceited
____ 37. Dominant
____ 38. Soft-spoken
____ 39. Likable
____ 40. Masculine
____ 41. Warm
____ 42. Solemn
____ 43. Willing to take a stand
____ 44. Tender
____ 45. Friendly
____ 46. Aggressive
____ 47. Gullible
____ 48. Inefficient
____ 49. Acts as a leader
____ 50. Childlike
____ 51. Adaptable
____ 52. Individualistic
____ 53. Does not use harsh language
____ 54. Unsystematic
____ 55. Competitive
____ 56. Loves children
____ 57. Tactful
____ 58. Ambitious
____ 59. Gentle
____ 60. Conventional

SCORING:

According to the inventory, the following traits are considered masculine traits: 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 37, 40, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 58. Feminine traits are the ones listed directly after each masculine trait (e.g. 2, 5, 8. . .). Neutral traits are listed directly after the feminine traits (e.g. 3, 6, 9).

Figure 3

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Students select one of the following for their project:

1. Analyze the ten top songs to see how men and women are portrayed in their roles.
2. Analyze advertisements in several different magazines to see how men and women are pictured in terms of economic wants and their roles. Determine if these differ from one "type" of magazine to another.
3. Conduct a survey among peers to see what students hope to be doing in 5, 15, 25 and 35 years. Compile and report the results. Examine the results to see how they may or may not fall into traditional roles.
4. Compare a children's reading textbook of ten-years-ago to current texts to determine what changes regarding human wants, incentives, roles and language have taken place.
5. Review research to determine what effect, if any, a mother's working outside the home has on her children.
6. Review articles on marriage partners switching traditional roles and on the reactions of the participants.
7. Brainstorm a list of jobs that often need to be done in a family. Conduct a survey to see which family members perform each task. Compile the results to see if the jobs fall into "stereotyped" roles. Speculate on the reasons for the results.
8. Compare results of the above survey to current family television shows.
9. Find out about the Equal Rights Amendment. Why do some people support it? Why do others oppose it?
10. Visit a factory and observe a product being made. Make a chart to trace the steps from the raw material to the final product. Include division of labor in the chart.
11. Locate information on reasons why workers are striking today.
12. Visit a major department store to find out how buyers purchase clothing and what information they have to take into consideration. Compare this to Rachel in *Rachel's Legacy*.

students are able to identify with characters in a novel, *Rachel's Legacy* serves as a vehicle to teach information about economics, history, linguistics and sociology. None of these elements is taught in isolation; they are interrelated with the novel so that they seem to naturally evolve from the discussion. The reading and discussions of the novel give students something to which they can relate the concepts previously studied to make them more meaningful, not only to the characters in the novel but also to their own lives.

The novel is a story of a Jewish immigrant mother and her three daughters: one fits the stereotyped version of the "traditional female"; one rebels against all of her mother's values, customs and expectations; and one, Rachel, is very independent, the opposite of the "traditional" role. Rachel is told that she "should have been a man."

Rachel is a seamstress in a garment factory and attends night school. Although she gains more responsibility at the factory, her salary does not improve because she is an immigrant and a woman. Determined to realize her dream, Rachel eventually opens a factory with her uncle and brother-in-law. However, it is Rachel who makes all of the major decisions.

After reading the novel, a modified BEM Sex Role Inventory (see Figure 2), originally designed as a self-assessment of androgyny, (Sandra Lipsits Bem), is administered to assess which traits apply to individual characters in a novel. Students discover that one sister in *Rachel's Legacy* is "feminine," one "neutral" and one (Rachel) "masculine" as defined by the inventory. Examining characters in a novel is probably less threatening for students than self-examination. Most, however, will think about themselves during the extended discussion that follows the administration of the instrument.

The family in *Rachel's Legacy* is Jewish; the Jewish culture, traditions, and Yiddish vocabulary are all central to Mama's life and to an understanding of the novel. A rabbi as a guest speaker can explain these, especially if s/he has been told about specific information to include in the lecture/discussion.

Near the end of the unit one half the class is given instructions to draw pictures of a cave *man* and *his* activities. The other half is given instructions to draw cave *people* and *their* activities. Comparing the pictures from each group leads into a discussion of words and how they affect people. Many words limit opportunities by closing options. The use of non-biased words to replace sex-biased words and the rationale for making these changes is discussed.

This unit may also include the economic concepts of wants, productive resources, opportunity costs, incentives, markets, supply and demand, savings and investment as they relate to *Rachel's Legacy*. Immigration and changes in immigration policy, which reflect changing attitudes, may be discussed. Debates in Congress over legislation regarding immigration policies, such as the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, help students relate the novel to the real world.

However the novel is handled, it is an excellent vehicle for helping students understand themselves, the roles they play in society, and the possible options which are open to them. As English teachers, one of our jobs is to open doors, to show students new options. It is a gentle but persuasive way to introduce a very important concept.

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SPECIAL SECTION

ALAN Award Recipient Sue Ellen Bridgers and her Literature

Sue Ellen Bridgers: Acceptance Speech for the ALAN Award

Several months ago I was pleased to receive a letter from Judy Beckman informing me that I would be the 1985 recipient of the ALAN award. Since then I have periodically thought, sometimes in the middle of the night, that I should get busy and write an acceptance speech. I admit that occasionally I have felt like my nephew Matthew who earlier this year was selected Citizen of the Week in his second grade class, an honor that required his writing an essay about himself to be displayed on the classroom bulletin board. "Why is it," Matthew wanted to know, "that I won and I'm the only person with homework?" Unlike Matthew, I think my homework assignment is worth it!

Actually, I first learned of the ALAN award last year when I attended the breakfast in Detroit at which Louise Rosenblatt was honored. Since then I have seen the list of other recipients, among them Bob Cormier, Ken Donelson, Jerry Weiss. What wonderful company to keep!

Of course, you have proven to be very good company, too. One of the real pleasures of the traveling, autographing and speaking I've done over the past years has been getting to know educators interested in books for young people and therefore interested in young people themselves. Collectively and individually, you have provided me with insights, enthusiasm, good times, and best of all, friendships, which are reward enough.

More often than not, teachers and librarians have charted the course for my books to reach their readers. You have been my harbour masters and pilots. I truly believe that these books, which grew out of character rather than plot, and which deal

more with head and heart than with adventure and intrigue, would have been dead in the water without you. So as allies and friends, you have proven to be fine company and I am grateful for that.

But, you and the previous recipients of this award are not the only good company I keep. It has been ten years since I first met Stella Willis, a gawky, headstrong little girl who wanted to belong somewhere. Perhaps you've heard the story of how Stella appeared in the car with me and my family when we were on our way to my hometown for the weekend. How eager she was to experience the life her father had abandoned, how determined to have her story told. Her willingness to participate in the untried, amateurish beginnings of a writer's work gave me the couraged to take on the novel form which demands, at the very least, stamina. I treasure Stella, my firstborn, along with all the other Willises who gave me their lives in good faith, trusting me to be diligent in my portrayal of them.

I suppose you all know that Casey came unwillingly. She was supposed to be a boy. Dwayne needed a buddy to hand out with. Jane and Ben would have worried less about a grandson on the loose. Taylor would have enjoyed the company of a nephew. But, it was Casey who came, wearing boys' clothes, saddle oxfords, her hair chopped off. I spent a long dreary winter with her, recreating the summer of 1951. Together we settled into that sultry heat, ate boiled dinners in a steamy kitchen, escaped the long slow afternoons on a sandlot baseball field, at the movies and the arcade, at the racetrack. We went to a wedding together, and became feverish and logged with pain. And finally we were healed in more ways than one. Casey Flanagan proved to be very good company indeed.

Then there is Bliss. Of all the characters in *Notes For Another Life*, it was she who provided me with the most encouragement and comfort. She was my best friend through a painful journey. Her acceptance of strife, her calm perseverance, her hopefulness, gave me the courage to face a difficult personal subject – the effect of mental illness on a family, especially on the children. When Kevin and Wren seemed to be faltering, she held us all up until we could get our bearings again. If there is any wisdom, any understanding in the book, it is hers.

As for Sara Will, that shy, uncompromising soul with whom I lived for two years, she was not always the best company, but she was the greatest challenge, and I suppose I love her best. After reading the book, a friend came to me and said somewhat tearfully, "I am just like Sara." "Oh," I said to comfort her, "we all are." In the months that followed, I learned that there really *are* many Saras. We come in different shapes and sizes; we live in city apartments and little towns; we are married and not; we are both shy and social. Sara's fears are part of the human condition we all share. In that way at least, we are alike. *Sara Will* was marketed as an adult book and has done well, but she has now been given a new lease on life through Harper and Row Books for Young Readers. You are, in part, responsible for Sara's story being accepted as a "cross-over" book. We thank you for that.

The whole point of my being here is to say thank you. It is a pleasure to be in this good company, to share in the bounty publishing offers to children, and to have my work honored by educators concerned with giving young people meaningful reading experiences. It takes all of us – the writer, the editor, the teacher, the reader – to make it happen. We are a community. Together we contribute to the process; we create the wholeness that is the writer's constant goal.

In that spirit, I would like to end with a quote I keep on the wall beside my desk from Reinhold Niebuhr:

"Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love."

Thank you for this award and for your commitment to our shared purpose – to give our very best to young people.

STORIES MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME: PART TWO

Sue Ellen Bridgers
Sylva, North Carolina

Time and place are joined to each other in a blood tie. The vital signs for a novel pulse there, at the "where" and "when". Once identified, they lack only the "who" because surely the "what" that follows will come naturally, the progression of events in time and place directed by a cast of characters to whom things will happen. "And so" the writer scribbles, frequently with invisible ink – and goes ahead.

The longer I work with the characters who people my books, the less sure I am of where they come from and why. There are some like Maggie Grover in *Home Before Dark* who take on a life apart from my intention and thereby change the course of the story, and some like Mae Willis who are so unsure and desperate that they let me control their destinies. There is Hazard Whitaker in *All Together Now* who proposed to Pansy quite spontaneously and against my better judgment. There is Jane Flanagan who assumed with ease and validity the role I gave her. I give up trying to approach these people in an objective fashion. I will leave that to scholars and reviewers whose hapless job it is to study creative-after-the-fact.

Of course I wouldn't deny the technical aspects of fiction writing, for writing is more work than inspiration and more practiced than spontaneous. It's important to me that I know what I'm doing while I'm doing it, but generally I don't know it in a way that can be recounted later. Recalling what I am thinking while I'm writing would be as impossible as recalling the actual words spoken between my great-grandmother and her sister-in-law on that front porch in 1898.

And yet, I know what they were saying, not because I heard it then, but because I can imagine it now. Their voices come to me over the snap and rhythmic fall of beans into a tin pan, over the squeak of a chair and the swish of feet under the swing. They speak of a wedding, a dress cut from Aunt Clarsy's new pattern ordered by mail. They talk of the new teacher who is coming to board for the winter, the new books they will send for. Aunt Clarsy recounts in half whisper the gossip from town because she has recently been there. They worry over a summer cough that doesn't go away, that common dreadful sign of impending doom. They speak without guile, or pretense or conceit, binding the common wounds of their difficult lives with a language that is sincere and supportive.

I could put words in their mouths, punctuated with the scene around them – fading light through the trees, a lamp suddenly lit in the parlor, the soft throaty warble as one of the girls sits down at the piano to accompany herself. I could give them words and you would not object because fiction would make the words real. You would be willing to be there with them. Together, you and I would make it happen, whether it did or not.

What is real and what is not? What is truth and where is it separate from fiction? Eudora Welty says that "human life is fiction's only theme." And so there is a place beyond the physical location, the land, the home. There is the heart.

When I began writing my second book which became *All Together Now*, I knew the place and it was not a country homeplace like the one Stella had loved, but a town homeplace – a big house on a

EDITOR'S NOTE: Stories my Grandmother Told Me: Part One by Sue Ellen Bridgers appears in The ALAN Review, Vol. 13, No. 1, Fall 1985, pp. 44-46.

shady street with more rooms than it needed – a room for a granddaughter, a room for a traveling man. It was the kind of house my great-grandfather built at the turn of the century for families of comfortable means in eastern North Carolina towns. It was a grandmother's house. It had a sideporch off the kitchen with red geraniums in clay pots on the ledge, a front porch with a swing, a dining room of inherited china and bulky, substantial furniture with a place for everyone at the table.

If *Home Before Dark* is about the land, then *All Together Now* is about the heart. And it is a grandmother's heart. Readers are apt to tell me what they think of Casey and Dwayne, and of course, I hear about Pansy and Hazard because their affairs seem most poignant and were intended to be. And yet it is Jane Flanagan, the grandmother, who holds the story together. She is the reason for Casey's coming and for Hazard's, too. She is Ben's wife, Taylor's mother, Pansy's friend. She provides the sustenance of their lives and it is not just meals, clean clothes and dustless surfaces, but also comfort and courage and a stillness at the center of things. It was she who laid on hands during Casey's illness. It was she who sat patiently on Pansy's porch waiting until her friend could break the silence that "shattered around them like tiny shards of glass they must be careful not to tread on." It was she who, years ago, took the summer sheers off her living room windows so her son could wrap them on the wings of a dream. She was like the women on the porch in 1898, but brought into 1950. Although she saw the world getting larger while her life stayed the same, she was proud of who she was. Beyond her identity as wife, mother, grandmother,she knew another one – a personal private sense of her womanhood itself. Like her ancestors she could say by heart the Magnificat, and the last chapter of Proverbs. She knew the story of Deborah, and of Jael's defeat of Sisera, and that the resurrected Christ first appeared to women. She believed that the hand that rocked the cradle ruled the world. Her world was small until she lost brothers in one war and sons in another. While the starred flag hung in the shadow of her window, she planted a victory garden. She never failed to vote. She survived the Depression, supported the Red Cross and joined the Mother's March for the March of Dimes. Her faith in her own power was so unquestionable that she never even identified it as power. She was admired for her community service, her patience, her thriftiness, her cooking, her cunning, her grace. In 1950, this woman, herself in her fifties, was content in little towns and rural communities all across this country.

She is not so happy today. Young women around her are making choices that didn't exist when she was younger. They are questioning the validity of the "stay-at-home" life she accepted, of volunteerism, of commitments that now seem more supportive than active. It is not enough to stuff envelopes, now she must make speeches. She buys frozen vegetables and jars of preserves in the supermarket because she is too busy to "put up" anymore. She makes use of every household convenience available to her and is not nostalgic about the limitations of the good ole days. She is on political advisory committees, the pulpit committee, the boards of directors of hospitals, homes for troubled children, banks and colleges. She's back in college herself. Her granddaughters have no intention of "coming out" or of marrying young, but they share expenses and apartments with their boyfriends. This grandmother has a job now outside the home or else there is something she "does."

In *Notes For Another Life*, the grandmother is a music teacher and a tennis player who cleans house because it is a necessary chore. She has taken in her grandchildren and also her son who is mentally ill and unable to function outside her care. She tries to understand her daughter-in-law who lives a life separate from her husband and children. She struggles to accept the fact that, just as she didn't make her son ill, she cannot make him well.

When this grandmother was young, she did not have options available to her daughter-in-law or her granddaughter. Perhaps she didn't even want them. Or perhaps she has regrets. Still she has accepted another woman's pursuit of a consuming, dynamic career and is supportive of her granddaughter's intention to become a concert pianist. But even with all the changes in the world that reflect on her life and values, this woman is still related to the women on the porch. The blood tie to place and family is still intact.

Because I feel this attachment keenly I write about life in families. I find that the lives that in-

terest me most are not isolated ones but those involved daily in the complicated footwork of family living. People related by blood share, whether they want to or not, a past and prospect of a future as real and as important as their present. I believe that a nuturing figure, whether it be mother, father, grandparents or some other adult, is essential to family life but I realize, looking back on my accumulated efforts as a writer, that I do not have many successful mothers. Forced to face this subject, I have tread on the troubled waters of my own psyche to discover that for me, motherlessness provides the ultimate, the all-consuming conflict. No matter what the relationship is, close or distant, strained or loving, mothers are still our source. They are perhaps the most unique and certainly the most complex attachment we will ever have.

Surely Casey's summer would have happened with her mother there. Surely Stella could have found a place to be without her mother's death. I admit that Kevin and Wren could have had plenty of trouble dealing with their father's illness even if their mother had been available to them. But for me, the absence of these mothers makes every word more poignant, every step more stumbling, every question more difficult to answer.

So there is a personal reason for these motherless situations, but at the same time, I believe I write about people as I find them. Technically the characters always come first and then the kind of people they are dictates what they do, just as you and I are products of heredity and environment.

Every writer faces the dilemma of whether to write about life as it is or life as it should be. I have never found much to say about the best of all possible worlds because fiction is based on conflict, not perfection. If Kevin and Wren were perfectly adjusted to their mother's absence and their father's illness, there would be no story to tell about them. In the world as it should be, there would be no mental illness and the decisions Karen Jackson had to make would be non-existent. She would be free to do whatever was best for her, unhampered by misunderstandings or disapproval. But that isn't how the world is, although I believe that in *Notes For Another Life*, three women are working toward their individual best possible worlds, each in their own way and with their own set of values and commitments. Bliss the grandmother is making the best of what life has given her. Karen, the mother, has changed her life drastically, taking action to save herself. The daughter Wren who is reaching maturity in the 80s, has the possibility of everything: faithful inspired commitments to other people, work she loves to do, a sustaining sense of self-worth that is not based on nurturing someone else. What these three women share over three generations of experiences is the hard knowledge that love is not always enough. They are each living with loss, but they are surviving.

I celebrate their opportunities and their achievements. I approach them longing to understand, never to prosecute or defend. They are part of a widening circle of family that I embrace everyday: men and women, both blood relations and close friends, who take us in, lending their security to our panic, their hopefulness to our despair, offering their acceptance of us which is not unlike that of a mother who, knowing our dark places, loves us anyway.

In the making of a book there are the essentials I have spoken of: time, place, the human element of character. But also commitment on the part of the writer to create this work she has envisioned, a world which contains the essentials in particular rather than general terms: a particular place, a certain time, human beings who are both singular and familiar. The writer must have an intention of some sort, a base of action. I see family life as the core of my writing. I have a personal past, a family history that, while providing me with fertile creative ground, also provides me with awesome responsibility. These people who remind me of the child in me, also remind me of the continuum. They show me that I am a link between the past and the future. In the present, I can explore a way of life that is the expectation of some and the memory of others.

We are all caught in our culture, searching for sense in the confusion, and no one is more trapped than the teenager. Faced with the problems of daily life – the tremendous freedom they have, the problems of ecology and economy, the real and oppressive fear of nuclear holocaust, they have more need for interdependence than ever before. They need to share their mutual concerns with adults. They need concrete goals. They need to know we are with them and that they have ideas and visions and love

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RESPONDING TO THE MAGIC: Sue Ellen Bridgers Talks About Writing

Anthony L. Manna
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio
Sue Misheff
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

For Sue Ellen Bridgers the key to writing fiction is the ability to become receptive to the stories that reveal themselves to her. From somewhere within the child or adolescent inside her, a scene comes into view, a character emerges and she knows that a story is forming. Long before the story appears on paper she becomes personally acquainted with her characters, endowing each of them with distinct traits and a unique voice. She not only must know their names, ages and physical characteristics; she must also become personally involved in their problems and relationships and how they fit into the world of the story. Kevin, Wren, Dwayne, Casey, Karen, Bliss and, most recently, Sara Will – these are a few of the younger and older characters who, like intimate friends and family members, have made themselves known to her through an almost magical communication. As she points out in the following interview, when her characters begin to speak, her challenge is to learn to listen to them.

Bridgers's skill for creating characters who live and breathe and who change and are changed by the world around them has won her continual acclaim by critics as one of the foremost contemporary writers of fiction. **Horn Book** praised her ability "to explore the innermost thoughts of her characters within the confines of a few pages" (April, 1977) in *Home Before Dark*, and to create characters who are "remarkably individualized" (April, 1979) in *All Together Now*. **Publishers Weekly** has described Bridgers as an author who "knows how to write and how to make readers care about people in a story . . ." (March 5, 1979).

In *Sara Will*, her most recent work, she continues to explore topics and themes found in each of her four novels: the tensions that develop in complex human relationships, the conflict between dependence and independence, resistance to personal change, and cultural stability and discontinuity. According to **Booklist**, *Sara Will* is "a beautifully written, ultimately heartwarming gem of a novel, with vital, memorable characterizations" (January 1, 1985).

Bridgers was born and raised in rural North Carolina where she continues to live and write. She is currently working on a novel, tentatively titled *Permanent Connections*, about a young man named Rob Dickson who matures outside the security of his family.

The following interview with Sue Ellen Bridgers took place in Detroit where she was the keynote speaker at the 1984 meeting of ALAN.

Sue Misheff

ALM: When did you first develop an interest in writing?
SEB: In the first grade when I realized that the alphabet I was learning had the same letters as the ones in the books my mother read to me. Now that I had the tools, I started immediately, within just a few weeks, to put words together into little poems and phrases. I was that interested in writing and language already, but of course I had years of having other things take precedence over writing.
ALM: Were you encouraged to write at home and at school?
SEB: I was given lots of opportunities to write creatively at school. Although the kinds of things my teachers did were not particularly innovative, they sure helped. Sometimes they would give us the first three sentences of a story and tell us to complete it, or now and then they would assign a poem. Class assignments made writing more valid in a way

because when you got a grade it was like getting paid. I'm sure the rest of the class despised me because my English teachers would often include a writing assignment for my sake since they knew I was interested. I've always been appreciative of the fact that they provided these opportunities. This just wasn't the standard thing to do in a small country school in the South. Then I got lots of poems published when I was in high school. You see, one of the newspapers in Raleigh, North Carolina, published a poem every day so the editors were always looking for poems. When I was about 13 or so I started sending my poems to them. It was very good for me to have this kind of success every few weeks. I was writing at home too. In fact, with the very first money I ever earned I bought a used typewriter, and, if my mother heard my typewriter clicking away, she would tell my friends that I was busy when they called or visited. All of this gave me the right and the encouragement to keep writing. It was as though people were saying that writing was important. But, you see, even in college when I was publishing poems and short stories in the school's literary magazine, I wasn't thinking about becoming a professional writer. I didn't think I could make a living at it. Every writer I knew, and I knew very few, was teaching. Maybe, just maybe, I might publish something, but that would be a diversion from teaching or some other job. Naturally, I wanted to be published. The writer who doesn't want to be published is not a writer. In the end there has to be somebody out there with whom you're communicating. Up to a certain point you can communicate with yourself, but after a short time that just doesn't suffice.

ALM: You have said that your mother encouraged you to become a writer. Was she an important influence?

SEB: Well, what she did on one occasion made such an impression on me that I can tell you what stop light the car was sitting at when she said it to me. I was about 12 when it happened. I was talking about my career goals and how I wanted to be a nurse when she said, "Why are you bothering yourself with all that? You know you're going to be a writer."

ALM: How did she know that?

SEB: Because she knew I had a strong interest in it. Maybe she also knew that if I got that kind of support from somebody as important as she was in my life, it would make a big difference. She was always very supportive of anything creative her children wanted to do. She never considered writing a frivolous activity or a waste of time. My grandmother influenced me too. She was a great storyteller. As a matter of fact, the oral tradition was very, very important in my family. A child's ability to listen to a story was valued. Also, I was read to a lot.

ALM: You've created a wide range of multidimensional women in your books. There's Mae in *Home Before Dark* who has such a hard time connecting with people and there's Karen in *Notes for Another Life* who leaves her family to pursue a career. Where does your mother fit into that range?

SEB: My mother's not in that range. I was very concerned about that when people started questioning me about the role of mothers in my books. I've done a lot of thinking about it and I've come up with a very simple theory. You see, my attachment to my mother is so strong that one of the worst things I can imagine is the loss of her. Therefore, writing about people who don't have a mother makes everything about their lives more moving to me and more powerful. It seems to me that the problems many of my characters have are so much harder to deal with because of that absence. Some of my readers assume just the opposite. They assume that I had an estranged relationship with my mother, that she was an absent parent and that I'm writing about my own childhood. Actually, I'm writing about my fear of her absence. That fear is an undercurrent in most of my work. Actually, my children think that Bliss, the grandmother in *Notes for Another Life*, is very much like my mother. Of all my older female characters she probably does have more of my mother's qualities, but I didn't think of that consciously while writing.

ALM: Have any writers influenced you?

SEB: I guess the first writers who influenced me are the ones who influence many teenagers. Hemingway and Steinbeck, for instance. You know, there was no young adult literature as such when I was an adolescent, so I moved from Nancy Drew and stuff like that to *A Farewell to Arms* and *Jane Eyre*. Books like these showed me what a good story was like and how you could take a small incident

and make a good story out of it. Of course, I didn't understand a lot of what I read, but I did see examples of good style. I guess I have been very influenced by Hemingway since those short sentences and the general terseness of his style has always appealed to me. It's important to me that there not be anything in a book of mine that is not essential. I feel most books are too wordy and so I do a lot of editing by skipping stuff. I would rather read a small, finely written book than one that's overwritten. That's why I tend to read writers Eudora Welty, Reynolds Price, Ann Tyler and other southern writers. Unfortunately, I don't write like any of these people.

ALM: Earlier, you mentioned that for a while other things took precedence over writing. Was there a time when you didn't write?

SEB: After I got married I had three children in five years. That was a very difficult time for me emotionally since I saw myself giving up everything but my role in the family. I had a lot of difficulty with that. It was only when my son, my youngest child, was three or four-years-old that I started writing again. I wrote secretly though because I didn't want anyone to know I was doing it. Luckily, the first things I sent out were bought by little literary magazines in North Carolina.

ALM: Once again, your audience was saying that they liked your stories.

SEB: Now I can look back on all those traumatic times when I was feeling useless, when I felt I had lost myself somehow in the domestic role, and realize that it was a very useful period. I learned so much about life when I was a young mother. Before that time I had been in a sheltered academic world, and now I was living in the real world with little money and a husband in the Air Force and then in law school. All those early experiences mattered because they helped to shape my sense of life and people. Yet, I've never been able to write about what's happening to me on a daily basis or about people my own age because it seems that the people who make themselves known to me as characters are invariably older or younger. I've never directly used my own life as material for my fiction. In a way, I guess you could say that I escape out of my life and into another place and time when I write.

ALM: Your characters are so complex. How do you develop them? Where do they come from?

SEB: I see all of them visually in some way. I see the opening scene, but where it comes from I don't know. I still haven't been able to figure out what's happening in my life that makes the character or the plot appear. It's just a heightened awareness that triggers some memory. For instance, I saw Sara Will coming down the road. I saw what she looked like and knew where she was coming from. I thought a long time about who she was. It's almost as though she was a long way from me, and over a period of months she got closer and closer until I knew her intimately. By that time she had a sister and they were in a situation. Then these other people came along. When I'm writing I don't think about a theme as such. Instead, I think about who these people are and what happens to them. Theme develops from there. When I got around to Eva, the teenager in *Sara Will*, I thought there was a possibility that the book would be about how she would live with other people, but Sara herself remained too strong. She dominated the book and I let her. When a character says to you, "Here I am," I have to go with that or else I would be giving myself more stress than I need. For instance, a new character by the name of Rob Dickson is presently coming into being. Although I've not had enough of a period of sensitivity to explore him fully, he has told me so far that he's 17 and that he's living away from his family. I'm struggling a little with him now, but I do know that I need to take him out of his own environment and put him into a place where he'll change and grow and find himself. At this point, he has revealed that much to me.

ALM: Is that kind of sensitivity to your characters something you have developed? Have you become better at it?

SEB: I don't know if I'm getting any better at being responsive. It's such a spontaneous thing. At first, there was so much mystery attached to it that I tried not to tamper with it because it was going real well. Now, I have to think about it more; it seems to me that it is getting harder to work spontaneously; that it is getting more difficult to find the key about the character that I latch onto. But this might mean an improvement in my work. I hope that the work is getting a depth that it may not have had to such a degree before. It's like the difference between Stella in *Home Before Dark* and Kevin in *Notes for Another*

Life. With Stella the complications are up front and immediately exposed. There's a lot more going on in Kevin's life; he was harder to get at because he's a much more complicated person and I was dealing with parts of his life that were hidden and complex.

ALM: Your characters are so fully developed it seems as though there are no minor characters in your books.

SEB: I hope not. They're all so important to me that when I'm writing I try to give each of them as much time and attention as they deserve. That's sometimes as difficult for me as it is for my readers. It's hard to get into so many minds at one time. Every time I do that I have to change gears and so does the reader. Remember that dinner scene in *All Together Now* when most of the characters are around the table? There are about six people in that scene. It was so intriguing to think about what's going on inside and outside their heads that I couldn't help moving from one character to another.

ALM: Does the small town rural way of life you grew up in figure into your work?

SEB: Oh, yes. When I was growing up I had a watchful eye. I listened to what people said and I figured out that there was a lot going on there. I was always looking for the undercurrent of why people were behaving the way they did. You see, the rural way of life is not necessarily a simple way of life. Although the setting of my books is rural and big adventurous things don't happen, the internal lives of people there can be very complicated. What they decide to do about their lives is just as important at the moment as when some powerful person is going through a big emotional upheaval. For rural people to be considered simple is really pejorative. One of the biggest problems facing the South right now is that the rural way of life as it used to be is not there anymore. For instance, no one's making money growing tobacco. And that's a real dilemma for me, someone who is so opposed to smoking, yet who comes from that way of life. Life in the rural South is very different now. It's hard to survive. I think that's where the statement, "We're all that's left of the Willises" comes from in *Home Before Dark*.

ALM: In *Something About the Author* you said about yourself: "I am also interested in family relationships, especially the tradition of southern women's two faces of gentility and power as portrayed in the domestic setting." What did you mean by that?

SEB: I am drawing on a great deal of heritage that implied that women have power but are not given the opportunity to use it effectively. That's what I was feeling during the early years of my marriage. I knew that I had something to say, but I didn't think I had any expression for it. When I was growing up I was constantly exposed to a sacrificial attitude in domestic settings, not only in my own family but in the rural southern town where I grew up. When I was young, I saw a variation of this theme in almost every home I visited where women were putting their lives aside in order to do what was expected of them as wives and mothers and daughters. I looked at my grandmother in that way. She was a very intense woman, but she was burdened with so many responsibilities that she could never get free. She was probably the writer in the family. She was certainly a wonderful storyteller. If only she had had the courage to step out and do what she could have done. I can remember as a child how I would watch her and wonder, "Why is she responding like that?" "What's happening with her now?" Of course, nobody gave me any answers because people's internal lives were supposed to be secret. You just didn't tell a child these things. And I don't know how accurate I am now as I relive some of this past and work pieces of it into my stories. After all, I am looking at it from a child's perspective because my emotional link with this kind of living is still a child's perception of it in lots of ways. I'm concerned about this because, on the one hand, I want to be a grown up person. I have this fear that if I get rid of too much of the child within me that I'm going to be in trouble as a writer. Someone once told me that creative people ought to find their ailment and take real good care of it because if you get rid of it you might lose whatever it is that makes you work. I think I have to keep that child perspective alive because that's where some very important memories are locked.

ALM: Family ties are given a lot of attention in your books. What does the idea of family mean to you as a writer?

SEB: I guess the reason family is strong in my work is that I feel so tightly connected to other people. I see my relationships to other people as family rela-

tionships; even my friends are my extended family. And I also see family life as the place where we're most apt to be terribly, terribly hurt, because people know so much and can use it against us. There are so many opportunities to either support or to crush someone. I just think you get a full range of what life can be in this little unit of three or four people, and so why not use that as the method or the metaphor for writing stories.

ALM: Who's your favorite character among the characters you've created?

SEB: Right now it's Sara Will, but ask me that question next year and I would probably say it's the character I'm working on at the time. I especially like Karen in *Notes for Another Life* because I've worried about her so much. I didn't want her to be misinterpreted; so I tried very hard to make her true to herself, to do what was necessary for herself so that she could make a life despite how people felt about her leaving her family. I didn't want to think about whether she was right or wrong in leaving. I was determined not to judge her. I wanted instead to accept her, to accept the fact that she said to me, "This is what I have to do. This is my survival." It was as if a friend had said that to me. The kind of support I would give a friend, I had to give Karen while I was imagining people around her reacting to her decision. I would simply have to say, "She did what she had to do." I found it intriguing that one reviewer thought I disliked Karen and that I was upholding Bliss as the epitome of womanhood. I never intended to be judgmental. I just wanted to present the facts of a life.

ALM: Do you have a routine as a writer?

SEB: My work habits have changed as my children have grown up. When I first started writing seriously, about the time I was working on *Home Before Dark*, and the children were in school, I would start writing in the morning and I would still be pecking away until the school bus dropped the children off. I was awfully hostile to my children when they got home. I'm so slow at figuring things out that it took months before I realized that a quick transition from writer to mother was more than I could take. So I changed my routine and stopped working at about noon in order to give myself some time before I took on the family role again. Now that the children are away, I'm free to write whenever I want. I only write when I'm writing though. I mean, I may have a period of a year between books when I don't write anything. That's my thinking period. That's when my room is filling up. I jot some things down of course, but I don't approach the typewriter with it until the characters are fully revealed to me, until I feel comfortable with their ability to tell me their story and my ability to be receptive to it. Basically, I may know how their story starts and how it's going to end, but the trail in the middle is still unknown to me. In order for them to tell me about the middle I have to know them fairly well or else they don't know what to tell me and I don't know what to hear.

ALM: It's as though you're opening yourself up to the story.

SEB: It's making yourself responsive to a life that is being revealed to you by some magical means. That's the strange part which I really don't understand. I always worry the whole time that nothing is happening in the story. My husband says I sound like a broken record because I'll say, "I've got 200 pages and nothing is happening." The only time I wasn't concerned with that was when I was writing *All Together Now* where some major event was happening in every chapter. I wrote that book chapter by chapter, finishing each chapter before I went on to the next. I knew that some active event was happening in each chapter.

ALM: Do you rewrite a lot?

SEB: No, I don't, because I've written most of the book in my head before I ever get to the typewriter. I'm probably into the second draft by the time I begin typing. I do rewrite some, but I don't have messy manuscripts. If anything, I might add to rather than take away, because in an effort to write tightly I sometimes don't write enough. You know, frequently you can record what someone's thinking in one sentence; you don't have to write three pages to do that most of the time. When I find myself slipping into three or four pages to cover a description of someone's thoughts, I assume I don't know what I'm talking about. But maybe I think everybody's attention span is as short as mine.

ALM: How do you feel about being labeled a young adult author?

SEB: I was really surprised that *Home Before Dark* was marketed as a young adult novel. I didn't know

anything about young adult novels so when I sent the manuscript to Knopf who accepted it in the juvenile department, I was surprised. But then I immediately thought, "Who better to have read this book than teenagers?" I knew nothing about the market, about the longevity that a YA novel can enjoy. My first thought was, "How great that kids are going to be offered this book." Of course, I was very gratified that adults were offered it as well. It was published in **Redbook** and **Reader's Digest** condensed books. I got a lot of mail from older people who said the book made them feel nostalgic. They got some very warm feelings from the rural atmosphere. However, when I write I really try not to think about specific readers. I just can't afford to restrict myself in any way because I would wind up trying to please my audience rather than myself. I have to write the novel that is being revealed to me.

ALM: What advice do you have for teachers of writing?

SEB: I think it's very important for children to be given lots of opportunities to express their emotions about things and to talk and write about their personal experiences. One of my friends who teaches remedial reading thinks the reason many of her students are nonreaders is that they have never considered their emotional lives valid. Because they are not taught to value their emotional lives, they don't know how to respond to a character in a book who has strong feelings. This affects writing too. When kids learn that their emotional lives don't count, then it becomes almost impossible for them to write down a story about somebody else and what's happening in that character's emotional life. We need to nurture students' feelings so that they don't pull the shade down on their emotional lives. Writing can flow from there.

ALM: Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?

SEB: Read a lot! Writers need to know something about everything. I know now that I overlooked some important areas in my education like the study of biology and the natural world. I need to know all of that. I would advise other writers to learn as much about everything as they possibly can.

Books by Sue Ellen Bridgers

All Together Now. Knopf, 1979.
Home Before Dark. Knopf, 1976.
Notes from Another Life. Knopf, 1981.
Sara Will. Harper, 1985.

Stories, Part Two, continued from page 55

to share that we adults are in true need of. They need books that reflect both the confusion and the calm, books that speak to the basic human need for companionship, books that portray family life in such a way that young people see the possibility of commitments to it that can sustain rather than destroy them.

I hope that the characters in my books portray such a commitment. I believe they are responsive to the collective well-being as well as to their individual goals and accomplishments. They face their days knowing how often the rain will fall, how frail we all are and yet how resilient.

My great-grandmother Bett and my Aunt Clarsy knew that. They came together in the late afternoon on one porch or the other. They came loving each other, hearing in the silence between them as much as in the words they spoke, a history, a past woven into the present so that who could separate either of them from the future. They came knowing the world was changing. Already in cities electric lamps brightened the evening sky. There was a telephone in the house and a sewing maching that bore stitches quicker than the eye could see. There was money now to send the children to college and colleges to send them to. They knew their daughters and their sons – those survivors – would be different from them, would know more about the world away from Renston, would be better educated, lose fewer children, find better ways to preserve the land and harvest its yield. Between them, as always, there was common cause and therefore, common language. And so I know what they spoke of and so do you. It was of the earth and of life and death and always – of love. It was women's talk, the fabric of fiction. I can hear it now.

THE SOUTH IN RECENT YOUNG ADULT NOVELS

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For generations, Americans from the North, Midwest, and West have had an ambivalent attitude toward the South, its culture and its people. They have sometimes seen the South as populated by fair maidens and chivalric gentlemen, sometimes as a peaceful rural paradise, sometimes as a dark world of poverty and violence. Over the years, literature for teenagers often has reflected this ambivalence.

Romantic South

On the one hand, readers and authors have idealized a region that they believe is filled with lovely ladies and handsome gentlemen surrounded by the scent of magnolias and living in gleaming plantation houses with columned porticoes. Fantasizing about and reading about a graceful and dramatic world of beauty, gaity, heroism and grandeur, those Americans who do not live in the South – and, indeed, quite a few who do – have thus accepted the Romantic South as a real rather than a fictional place. They have remembered the first chapters of *Gone with the Wind*, but not the last ones.

Poverty South

At the same time, many who are not Southerners, have viewed the South as an area of ignorance and bigotry. Caricature sheriffs with big bellies, lynchings, hillbillies, sloppy speech have been the bases of that other view of the South. Seen from this perspective, all black Southerners and most poor white Southerners live in terror of the Ku Klux Klan, the Boss, the Sheriff, the Mine Owner, and Mill Owner and the Banker. Most Southerners live in rural poverty in dirt-floored cabins on worked-out farms or in isolated mountain valleys called "hollows" by the rest of the world and "hollars" by the natives. In this view, mostly stupid, mostly illiterate, mostly hopeless, these Southerners speak, not the sweet accents of Scarlet O'Hara, but a mumbled mush that is impossible to understand, and regularly interlaced with odd expressions.

While the Romantic view of the South is largely a single view and a positive one, this one, which might be called the Backward South, actually consists of two quite different responses. First, there are those who react by emphasizing the grimness of Southern life and do so with moral outrage. Like the abolitionists before them, they are determined to bring about change. They, the books they write and the parts of books they remember give as one-dimensional a view of the South as the novels of the Romantic School. They tend to see 99 percent of Southerners as good-hearted but oppressed poor, and the other one percent as evil, powerful Bosses. They stress the wickedness of the Feudal South as the Romantics stress the virtues of feudal relationships.

Another set of believers in the Backward South see the ignorance, poverty and strange speech habits of the region as funny rather than tragic. In this view, when Southerners remain in the South, they spend most of their time running moonshine or wrecking cars. *Smokey and the Bandit* and *The Dukes of Hazzard* depict this version of the South. On the other hand, if Southerners leave the South, their encounters with the sophistication of the world is seen as hilarious. Re-runs of the *Beverly Hillbillies* show naive emigre Southerners befuddled by the modern world.

Literary South

There is a third stereotyped view of the South. Although not nearly as widespread as the other two, it is, nevertheless, a very powerful one. It is also one in which many Southerners are closet believers, as many are also closet Romantics. In this

view, the South is filled with fine poetry and great novels. The literate write those novels; the less literate compose folk songs and enrich the English language with their colorful speech. No less a stereotype than the Romantic and the Backward South, this view, held mostly by the literate, the educated and the cultured, see the Southerners who can read and write as consisting largely of people like William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Thomas Wolfe and Jesse Stuart.

Each of those stereotypes has a touch of the real and as much of the unreal as any unified view of a diverse people. The South is no one place or people. Geographically it slips over into West Virginia, western Virginia, parts of Kentucky and Tennessee; that is, it includes Appalachia. This region from which Granny and the other Beverly Hillbillies are supposed to have come, is a different world from that of Plains, Charleston, Richmond and Savannah. The mountainous South that spreads over beautiful, rugged, coal-rich but isolated and poverty-burdened Appalachia is viewed, even by other Southerners, with a mixture of romance and scorn similar to the attitudes of the rest of the country toward the entire South. Eastern North Carolina looks north and south to other states that make claims to aristocracy and west to its mountainous other half, whose people are incomparably different from the fishermen of the coast and the tobacco farmers of the piedmont.

The Young Adult Novel and the South

These stereotyes marred the treatment of the rural South in most young adult novels until the last few years. Early in the development of the young adult novel, many authors used settings in rural areas and small towns, particularly in the South. These young adult novels, usually dealing with horses and dogs, hunting and teenage love, had little to do with Southern people and their culture. They rarely made contact with the social and economic problems of the South; they were merely set in the South. The problems of the South were part of the taboos that Dwight Burton identified in *Literature Study in the High School* (1970). There were few exceptions. *In Shuttered Windows*, Florence Crannell Means rose above the sentimentality of the young adult novel of her time to picture the strength of Southern black culture, as well as the invidious effects of racial prejudice and the resulting suppression of black people. However, few teenagers were given the chance to read her books.

In most cases, however, the young adult novels of the 1940s and 1950s set in the South reflected either the Romantic or the Funny Backward stereotypes. They bore little relation to the stark reality of the region during these years. Authors of these novels seemed to use the South to create a nostalgic world of country living, hunting, farming, riding a dearly-loved horse and living with treasured dogs. It was the teenage version of the Romantic South, but with even less that was truly Southern than adult novels that were formed from the stereotype. Or, the books were about a funny world of hicks, hillbillies and rednecks. Certainly, they showed no influence from the splendid Southern writers of those decades such as Flannery O'Connor, Faulkner and McCullers.

In the 1960s, attention in the young adult novel to an idealized rural South was largely replaced by a concern with such topics as drug addiction, illegitimacy, divorce and homosexuality. Although it is likely that such problems existed in the rural South as much as anywhere else, the settings of the young adult novels written in the 60s and especially the early 70s shifted from the small towns and farms of the earlier novels to large cities and their suburbs. Indeed, most of the settings were outside the South. A few young adult novels did deal with the problems of racial prejudice in Southern towns. *South Town* by Lorenz Graham and the other novels in his series looked at black life in the South and at the black expatriate in the North. Bella Rodman's *Lions in the Way* also tried to explore the problem of school integration. A few authors like Vera and Bill Cleaver *(Where the Lilies Bloom)* specialized in Southern and Appalachian regional stories, and in *Where the Red Ferns Grow* Wilson Rawls depicted an essentially Southern mountain story set in the Ozarks. The fare was pretty thin, however. The typical young adult novel of this time seemed to deal with either a black drug addict or a gang leader living in the ghetto of a major city or with a middle class white teenager whose parents were contemplating divorce.

More recently, however, a number of young adult novels have been set in the South and in Southern

Appalachia. In fact, there seems to be a renewed interest by young adult authors in the people and customs of the American South. Unlike the superficial, sentimental novels of the 40s and 50s, many recent young adult novels set in the South deal in profound ways with the Southern people, their culture and problems. Some treat the modern South; some look to the recent past, some, to the distant past. Authors like Sue Ellen Bridgers, Katie Letcher Lyle, Mildred Taylor and Katherine Paterson write in the tradition of Southern literature – in the tradition, that is, of Eudora Welty and McCullers. They write from the South; they do not merely place their stories there.

The tragedy of black Americans was largely ignored in the literature of the South until recently, and authors of young adult literature were also guilty of that omission, Means's *Shuttered Windows* being a notable exception. Mildred Taylor in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, filled that gap with a novel so beautifully written that it won the Newbery Award in 1977 and, more importantly, gave readers a young adult novel that genuinely appealed to adults. Earlier, Paula Fox produced the agonizing *Slave Dancer*, also a Newbery Award winner; and Virginia Hamilton captured a Newbery Award for *M. C. Higgins, the Great*, set on the edge of strip-mined Appalachia. In two novels about Ludell Wilson, *Ludell* and *Ludell and Willie*, Brenda Wilkinson presented the Southern black world, on the verge of drastic change, but, despite its hardships, possessing its own integrity and power.

Characters

Southern literature has always been famous for its treatment of characters, especially bizarre characters and those driven by dark forces within their world and themselves. Faulkner, O'Connor and Harper Lee show us those people and the forces that drive them. So do Bridgers, Lyle and the Cleavers. Think of Mary Call of *Where the Lilies Bloom* and *Trial Valley* with her proud determination – or Stella, of Bridgers's *Home Before Dark*, also proud, also determined. Both are characters of the South, like the women, old and young, of Welty's stories. Bizarre characters abound. There is the wild boy in *Trial Valley*; the long courting, briefly married, almost never married old couple in *All Together Now*; the father and the wild Indian in *A Ballad for Hogskin Hill* (James Forman). They are as true to the South and to themselves as the dwarf and giantess in McCuller's *Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, the characters that form the family in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and those in O'Connor's stories.

Language

The speech of the South has been looked at with the same ambivalence as its culture and people. Badly reproduced in movies and television programs, it is often found charming. Actually spoken by real-life people, it produces scorn, laughter or pity. Yet it represents a wide scope of linguistic varieties: the African influenced speech of coastal South Carolina and Georgia, the French influenced speech of parts of Louisiana and the early modern English still appearing in the mountains of the Appalachia. There are the forward or broad sounds of rural Georgia and Mississippi, the many varieties of black speech found throughout the region and the old, nearly lost, pockets of antique upper class accents found in Virginia and South Carolina.

More important, the literature of the South is as much a literature of language as it is one of character of setting. The Elizabethan richness of Faulkner, the wild variations of O'Connor, the deceptively naive prose of McCullers, the pure Southern rhythms of Welty are matters of conscious style, of careful attention to language. Dialect operates not only in the speech of their characters, but also in the magic of their narrative. Their stories are one fabric from the language of their South. Lyle has captured that Southern richness in some of her narratives. Mildred Lee subtly contrasts the Southern mountain speech of Lanthy Farr to the Boston accents of Drew Thorndike in *The People Therein*. Bridgers is a master. Taylor in *Roll of Thunder* depicts dialect magnificently. Style and language from and of their region mark these new Southern novelists as they enrich the young adult genre.

Setting

Southern literature has also been the epitome of literature of setting. The small towns of McCullers, the rural environs of O'Connor and Faulkner, the

towns and country of Welty and the cities, towns and country of Robert Penn Warren dominate and control the characters, lives and plots of their novels. The literature of the South is as much a literature of setting as it is a literature of language, people and events.

Hogskin Hill is as much a character as any of the humans in Forman's novel, as, in its way, is the giant steam shovel that drives like a relentless force across the land and people. The farm and tenant house of *Home Before Dark*, the rural Virginia landscape of William Armstrong's *Sounder*, the slave ship as an extension of the South in *The Slave Dancer* and the Great Smoky Mountains of *The People Therein* are all actors in their stories, not merely backdrops. The power of the land is, in many ways, a living force for such authors. Faulkner's Yawknapatopha County invades and dominates the lives of those who live there; and, in many recent young adult novels, place is an equally powerful force.

Plot

Finally, the Southern novel of the 20th Century has been marked by a belief in uncontrolled and uncontrollable fate. Even in the midst of laughter, Faulkner and O'Connor see Southerners driven to their actions by fate. In their darker moments, they and McCullers, Warren, Harper Lee, Katherine Ann Porter and Wolfe seem to believe that the tragedies of the South – slavery, war, repression, poverty – have created a fated people. Although individual and frequently bizarre, these Southern people are, nonetheless, trapped by the power that moves their world, like characters in a Greek tragedy.

The modern young adult novelists of the South seem to recognize the power of fate, although they are usually willing to let their characters master that fate, a mastery more exciting and moving than any mere conquest of simple events. Perhaps the most impressive example of the power of fate among these novels is the force that moves the black family of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* toward crisis and confrontation. They are successful, even prosperous. They cope with the prejudice of their white neighbors. They are protected by reasonably decent, influential white people. Yet one knows that, ultimately, the power of fate operating in their time is driving them toward disaster. It seems that they cannot survive, that the social forces of the time will not let them survive. One might guess that they are not in control of their own lives. Fate seems to move them toward ruin as the people in *Absalom, Absalom!* cannot change the fate that rolls them forward, like a wave, on the wave of Faulkner's prose.

But these new Southern writers rarely reject the power of the human spirit to survive and control fate. Thus Stella in *Home Before Dark* will not let fate dominate her, although her mother is a slave to it. In *All Together Now*, Casey and Dwayne, despite their mostly joyful summer, are ultimately overcome by the fate that moves to put Dwayne in a home for the retarded. At the same time, however, Hazzard and Pansy struggle against their fate to love, but never to be together – he, in his tent, she, in her soul. Bridgers once said that Hazzard and Pansy nearly took the novel away from her, and in the end they forced her to bring them back together. Perhaps, then, they were so determined to control their fate that they took charge of the writing of their novel, to be sure that fate was not in charge of them.

Conclusion

Southern literature has a magnificent tradition. In the 20th Century authors like Wolfe and Faulkner, Warren and McCullers looked at their region and produced works of greatness. They used the language, the fears, the world, the culture of their people as the clay to shape an image of men and women, the blacks and whites, the rich and poor, the mountain folk and the tobacco farmers of the rural South. In that great tradition, write Mildred Taylor, Sue Ellen Bridgers, Katherine Paterson and the other authors of this new young adult literature of the South. They meet the challenge well.

Suggested Readings

Armstrong, William. Sounder. Harper, 1972.

Branscum, Robbie. Johnny May. Doubleday, 1975. Avon, 1976.

Bridgers, Sue Ellen. All Together Now. Knopf, 1979. Bantam, 1980.

Home Before Dark. Knopf, 1976. Bantam, 1977.

Cleaver, Bill and Vera Cleaver. **Trial Valley**. Lippincott, 1977. Bantam, 1978.

Where the Lillies Bloom. Lippincott, 1969. New American Library, 1974.

Crook, Beverly Courtney. **Fair Annie of Old Mule Hollow**. McGraw-Hill, 1978. Avon, 1980.

Forman, James. **A Ballad for Hogskin Hill**. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.

Fox, Paula. **The Slave Dancer**. Bradbury, 1973. Dell, 1975.

Lee, Mildred. **The People Therein**. Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Lyle, Katie Letcher. **Finders Weepers**. Coward, 1982.

The Golden Shores of Heaven. Lippincott, 1976.

Paterson, Katherine. **Bridge to Terabithia**. Crowell, 1977. Avon, 1979.

Jacob Have I Loved. Crowell, 1980. Avon, 1981.

Rawls, Wilson. **Where the Red Ferns Grow**. Doubleday, 1961. Bantam, 1974.

Rockwood, Joyce. **Enoch's Place**. Holt, 1980.

Taylor, Mildred. **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**. Dial, 1976. Bantam, 1978.

Wilkinson, Brenda. **Ludell**. Harper, 1975. Bantam, 1980.

Ludell and Willie. Harper, 1977. Bantam, 1981.

Wallin, Luke. **The Redneck Poacher's Son**. Bradbury, 1981.

An Opinion, continued from page 26

intensity. They need the help of those whose reputations as critics of literature in general and YA fiction in particular are well established. All with these credentials should pitch in; it is indeed a worthy cause.

Some further suggestions. The criteria for well-written novels for young people, developed by Dorothy Petitt in her doctoral research way back in 1961, should be reviewed both by teachers and English Educators. They are clear and comprehensive. The text, *Literature Study for Today's Young Adults* by Donelson and Nilsen provides some excellent ideas for judging works of this genre and should be read with care. The **English Journal** can also get into the act. More YA novels can be reviewed there, and more critical essays can be published, discriminating between works of high and low quality, and presenting solid scholarly reasons for teaching those YA novels of high quality.

In general, the profession needs to ready itself for the waves of criticism that are bound to come in the near future. To exhort most readers of **The ALAN Review** to do so is, in the words of John Crowe Ransom's poem "Dead Boy", a "friendly waste of breath." Just don't forget: some strong, persuasive and reasoned support for this highly valuable genre is needed now more than at any time in its relatively short history. We're Horatius, there's the bridge, and here come the Tuscans!

References and Works Mentioned

Burress, Lee and Edward R. Jenkinson. **The Students' Right to Know**, NCTE, 1982, pp. 15-16.

Jennings, Frank G. Literature for Adolescents – Pap or Protein. **English Journal**, December 1956, pp. 526-31.

Nilsen, Allen Pace and Kenneth L. Donelson. **Literature Study for Today's Young Adults**. Second Edition. Scott, Foresman, 1985.

Petitt, Dorothy J. **A Study of the Qualities of Literary Excellance Which Characterize Selected Fiction for Younger Adolescents**. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Minnesota, 1961.

NON-FICTION
NEWS FROM ALAN AND BEYOND

Conferences, Courses and Events

The Children's Literature Association 1986 Conference, "From Hannibal to Oz: Journeys in Children's Literature" will be held at the University of Missouri at Kansas City on May 16-18, 1986. Illustrator Trina Schart Hyman and authors Robert Cormier, Dean Hughes, Carol Kendall and Jan Greenberg will talk about their work. For more information contact Norma Bagnall, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507.

The Smithsonian Institution will offer a one week course, "Using Museums to Teach Writing", July 8 - 17. The course, which is accredited at the University of Virginia, is for elementary and secondary teachers living more than 75 miles outside Washington, D.C. Enrollment is limited. For more information write to: National Seminars, Office of Elementary and Secondary, Arts and Industries Building, Room 1163, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

"The Matter of Britain IV: The Welsh Theme" is a study tour of Britain that will focus on children's and young adult literature of Wales. The tour will be conducted by Mary Lou Colbath and Mary Lou White from July 13 - 17. Attendance at the International Reading Association's World Congress in London, July 18 - 31, is an option. For more information contact: STORY-TOUR, College of Education and Human Services, 376 Millett Hall, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435.

Call for Papers

The ALAN Review is calling for articles from teachers, librarians and university faculty members on such themes as humor and YA literature, poetry for young adults, non-fiction for young adults and historic(al) fiction for young adults. Future issues will feature the literature of these genres and teaching methodologies that make this literature central to the curriculum. Other articles and research reports focusing on YA literature, its use in the classroom and its place in the library are always welcome.

Submissions are sought for a special section in Children's Literature Association **Quarterly** on children's literature and popular culture. Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate, typed and double-spaced, and should follow the MLA style Handbook. Deadline for submission is September 15, 1986. Send manuscripts or inquiries to: Jan Alberghene, 19 Maple St., Dover, NH 03820 or Lucy Rollin, Rt. #5 - Box 233, Seneca, SC 29678.

Awards

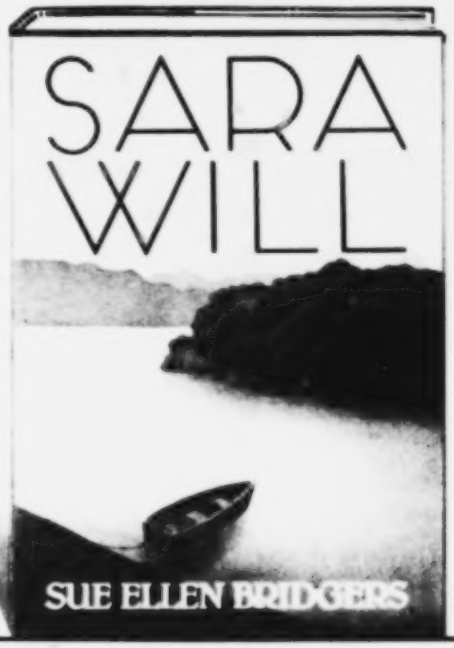
Author Sue Ellen Bridgers (*Home Before Dark, Notes for Another Life, All Together Now* and *Sara Will*) was the 1985 recipient of The ALAN Award. The Award is given annually at the ALAN breakfast, this year on November 23, to the person, by estimation of the Award Committee, who has contributed the most to the field of young adult literature.

Anita C. Wilson of the Department of English, Miami University in Ohio is the winner of the Children's Literature Association Scholarship Award. She received the award for her work in

YA Editors' Choice '85
—ALA *Booklist*

SARA WILL
by
Sue Ellen Bridgers

"A spinster in her fifties, Sara Will hides behind a facade of cold indomitability until Fate Jessop, his unwed teenage niece Eva, her baby and her too-ardent suitor disrupt Sara's self-imposed isolation of self and spirit. A beautifully written, ultimately heartwarming gem of a novel, with vital, memorable characterizations." —(Starred) *Booklist*
$14.70* 0-06-020691-8



*Invoice price. Trade ed. Publisher's price only and in no way reflects the price at which available from any other source
Jacket design - Fred Marcellino
Harper & Row

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the criticism and reviewing of children's literature in British Victorian periodicals. Jill P. May of Purdue University is the winner of the Weston Woods Scholarship. She will reassess the impact of Disney to ascertain whether his reputation for vulgarizing and popularizing is merited. She believes, particularly in the case of **Bambi**, it may not be.

News from Publishers

Eleanor Cameron's *The Green and Burning Tree: On Writing and Enjoyment of Children's Books* has been reissued by Atlantic-Little, Brown. Readers will find critical essays on fantasy, style, children and books, and a final section entitled "Vision and Act", in which the author attempts to define vision and how it relates to the literature of children.

Presenting Robert Cormier is a new book by Patricia J. Campbell published by Twayne Publishers. This book attempts to examine the paradox of the man as author, and to examine his works in light of his life. It marks one of the first significant attempts at literary criticism dealing with young adult books and authors. This is a must read for Cormier fans and scholars interested in literary criticism of young adult books.

Behind the Covers by Jim Roginski has just been released by Libraries Unlimited. The book contains interviews with authors of children's and young adult books. Featured authors include Isaac Asimov, Avi, Jean Fritz, Patricia Lee Gauch, Bette Greene, Isabelle Holland, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Ellen Raskin, William Sleator, Todd Strasser and Jane Yolen. Part of Roginski's interview with Jane Yolen appears in the Spring 1985 issue of **The ALAN Review**.

NCTE has just released a new edition of *Adventuring with Books: A Booklist for Pre-K - Grade 6*, edited by Dianne L. Monson. The 1985 edition annotates 1,700 titles published from 1981-1984. Suggestions for classroom use are given where appropriate.

Outstanding Books for the College Bound, compiled by Mary Ann Paulin and Susan Berlin, has just been released by the American Library Association, Young Adult Services Division. The book lists over 500 titles, many of which have appeared on the 24 short lists prepared annually by YASD/ALA. The book can be ordered for $1.95 from YASD Orders, ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

Another publication of YASD/ALA of interest to **ALAN Review** readers is *Youth Participation in School and Public Libraries* which describes successful youth participation programs in libraries. Practical recommendations and guidelines for implementing the programs are included. The book can be ordered for $5.00 from YASD.

Many of us who teach writing to adolescents and who have cultivated many fine adolescent writers have yearned for a publication to publish the work of our students. A new publication will do just that. *Merlyn's Pen* is published four times during the school year. Subscriptions are available in class sets. The publication can't help but inspire students to read and write. If you have not yet seen this excellent new publication, contact R. Jim Stahl, Publisher and Editor, Merlyn's Pen, Inc., 98 Main St., East Greenwich, RI 02818.

"Powerful"[1] "Transfiguring"[2] "Impressive"[3]
"Filled with wonders"[4]
IN SUMMER LIGHT
by Zibby Oneal
"Kate Brewer's seventeenth summer is marred by a case of mono and an unfinished paper on The Tempest. Although her father is no Prospero, his enormous talent as an artist and his ability to charm and dominate his family summon up parallels .....One wishes the story, like the last few days of August, continued beyond the final and transfiguring moment of recognition and acceptance between Kate and her father."
★—Horn Book (starred review)[2]
"It's hard to say which is more impressive in this literate, complex story—Oneal's use of language, imagery, and color or the development of her finely drawn characters."
★—School Library Journal (starred review)[3]
"Filled with wonders.....Oneal's exquisite prose leaves the indelible memory of what the word art means."
★—Publishers Weekly (boxed review)[4]
"With this powerfully evocative coming-of-age story, Oneal tops her two previous award winners [The Language of Goldfish and A Formal Feeling, both available from Viking Kestrel]. She weaves a seamless spell around readers that never falters."
★—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)[1]
0-670-80784-2 160 pp. $11.95
VIKING KESTREL
Viking Penguin Inc.
Children's Book Marketing Department
40 West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010

An Important Media Release

Many times in **The ALAN Review** contributors and readers have discussed the censorship problem and wished for creative ways to deal with it. "Books Our Children Read" is a wonderful new film, distributed by Films Incorporated, which deals with one school's "solution" to the problem. Viewers will be amazed at the simple, common sense approach used by Fort Frye (Ohio) Middle School. The value of the film is that it not only describes the program and features the participants, but gives helpful advice for setting up a

continued on page 70

"Now that you asked. . ."

Ruth Cline,
University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado
Elizabeth Poe,
Arvada West High School, Jefferson County, Colorado

Louise Collier, from Arvada, Colorado writes: "I teach a contemporary Literature course which includes the novel *Ordinary People*. Could you suggest other works not so entrenched in personal tragedy that the reader is left feeling depressed?"

Putting realism in Young Adult novels into a societal context, developed rapidly in the late 60s. It was a strong reaction to events in society, such as Vietnam, and to the superficiality of the novels of the 40s and 50s. Rather than dwelling on who gets a date for the prom, YA fiction began to stress the many serious problems confronting adolescents. *The Saturday Review* (Merla, Nov. 4, 1972) suggested:

> we are beginning to think of childhood less as a state of innocence and more as a period of greater maturity. . .these new books are a means to bridge the much-discussed "generation gap" – a way to help young people overcome their alienation. (p.46)

Young Adults wanted realism to prepare for their lives while adults wanted fantasy to escape from theirs. While *Ordinary People* emphasizes personal tragedy, the two books we have chosen focus on personal growth, which makes them satisfying reading experiences.

In Sue Ellen Bridgers' *Home Before Dark*, the Willis family, after being migrant workers for 16 years, move back to their father's hometown. Like Beth from *Ordinary People* who never adjusted to the loss of her son Buck, Mae Willis is unable to adjust to a stationary life. She is afraid of losing the closeness of the life her family shared as they lived out of their dusty white station wagon. Both women leave their families: Beth moves away and Mae is killed by lightning. The fathers remain and provide love and understanding that enable their children to survive. One difference in the comparison is that while *Ordinary People* ends with Beth's leaving, *Home Before Dark* continues to show the loving, caring and understanding relationship between Stella and her father. Bridgers' sensitive portrayal of human wants, fears, sexuality, resilience and sustaining love make this a novel rich with insight into the complexities of life. Because it focuses on personal growth rather than personal tragedy, *Home Before Dark* provides a sense of hope and satisfaction that does not leave the reader feeling depressed.

Another satisfying novel, *A Solitary Blue* by Cynthia Voigt, also centers on a father-child relationship, showing us the scars of child neglect caused by Jeff's mother who walks out on the family. Jeff, in second grade at the time, is afraid his professor-father will also leave. He tries not to bother his father when he is studying, and works to please him. Gradually, Jeff and his father begin to communicate and develop a mutual understanding similar to the relationship between Conrad and his father in *Ordinary People*. *A Solitary Blue* covers Jeff's life from childhood to adolescence, and portrays the personal growth that follows a tragic event in the life of Jeff and his father. *Ordinary People* takes place in less than one year and concludes with Beth's departure. Both Bridgers and Voigt carry the families in their novels through the trauma of separation and show a resolution.

Both of these books could be used as class novels or as supplementary reading in a Contemporary Literature class.

Authors' Note: "Now that you asked. . ." is a column devoted to answering the questions of readers who wish information on young adult literature and its authors, or about the teaching and publishing of this literature. Send questions to: Ruth Cline, School of Education, Box 249, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

Professional Riches, continued from page 11

on the role of religious themes in books. These are only samples of the changes to be found. To be sure, this second edition embodies more than just a few modifications. The entire text has been reworked to varying degrees to further refine the already high quality of this book.

So there you have them, three winners. Actually, the winning continues right down the line: Professors and teachers win by having solid professional tools, but most important is the fact that students in their teens are the ultimate winners. They can reap the benefits of strengthened and enlightened teaching which leads them to real experiences with literature.

World War II, continued from page 14

Kerr, Judith. **The Other Way Round.** Coward, 1975.
Koehn, Ilse. **Mischling, Second Degree: My Childhood In Nazi Germany.** Greenwillow.
Wiesel, Elie. **Night.** Avon, 1972.

Non-Fiction, continued from page 68

sundar program in any school. A study guide on the film is available. For Rental or purchasing information contact: Films Incorporated Education, 1213 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, IL 60091.

Special Books

One of the delights of editing a review journal is the books that come across my desk daily. Every so often special books, not appropriate for review in the journal, catch my eye. In recent months four of these books, marketed primarily to a younger audience, but appropriate for all ages, are worthy of mention. Young adult fantasy writer Walter Wangerin has written a marvelous Christian allegory called *Potter* (David C. Cook Publishing Co.). In the book Potter, the young protagonist, comes to terms with his best friend's death and his own mortality through a small bird who takes him on a fantastic journey. For many families and in many classrooms this book is a wonderful read-aloud choice.

Children's author/illustrator Chris Van Allsburg has written and illustrated a book that is likely to become a Christmas classic, *The Polar Express*. The book is for and about believers of fantasy. It is worth purchasing for the illustrations alone, but the storyline is one that can become a part of your holiday tradition at home or in your classroom.

Two amazing mechanical books have been published by Random House. *The Genius of Lothar Meggendorfer* is a series of this 19th century artist's poems and moveable pictures. The delight of the book comes at the end when readers are shown how the whole thing works. The book is designed by David Pelham, illustrated by Jim Deesing after Lothar Meggendorfer and engineered by Tor Lokvig. *Universe* by Heather Couper and David Pelham is a presentation of the big bang theory, the galaxies, starbirth, the solar system, star death and the end of the universe. This truly amazing book has the most elaborate mechanical art work I have ever seen. Readers/viewers can manipulate many of the pages to help better explain the theories. In addition the text is excellent and easy to understand. It does not interfere with the moveable art work, however, since it pulls out from each side of the page. I guarantee that even though the text is hidden, you'll find yourself seeking it out to help you better understand the illustrations.

Research

Earl Lomax (David Lipscomb College, Nashville, TN) attempted in his dissertation to determine the characteristics of the typical young adult novel published between 1968 and 1979. He identified 12 characteristics: (1) problem novel, (2) adolescent protagonist, (3) previously taboo subjects, (4) 14 to 17-year-old white, middle class protagonists, (5) shorter than adult novels, (6) first or third person, limited in time to less than one year, (7) protagonist in conflict with society, (8) initiation archetype, (9) explicitly dealing with difficulty of growing up, (11) non-didactic and (12) romance.

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CONTEST
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Membership is open to anyone interested in literature for adolescents. Although ALAN is an assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, members do not necessarily have to belong to the parent organization. Institutional memberships are welcomed. This form may be reproduced. Memberships will also be accepted in letter form. Journal included in membership fee.

Name _____
Mailing address _____
_____ Zip _____

Name of ALAN member submitting 6 new members' names
_____
Mailing address _____

Make check or money order payable to ALAN

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$10 yearly ☐

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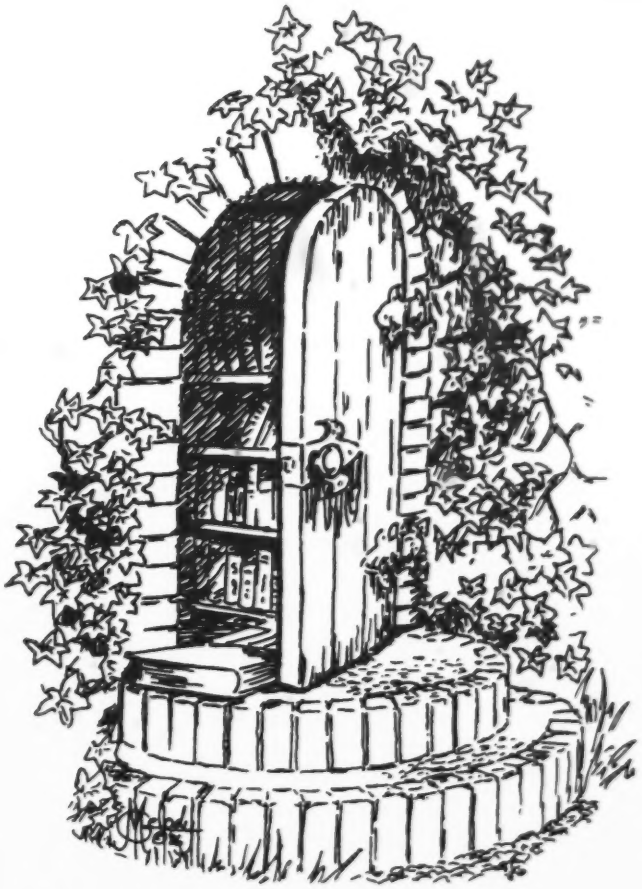
THE BACK DOOR



A Compromise

Several weeks ago I sat in the bright sunny classroom of Maggie*, a student teacher, and Ms. Ledbetter, a talented high school English teacher. Maggie was telling me enthusiastically about her plan to develop a paperback lending library for the classroom, particularly emphasizing books for a unit she was planning.

I have known Ms. Ledbetter for some years and have always been impressed with her creativity and caring. So, when I glimpsed her cold eyes and uncompromising frown, I was surprised.

"Maggie," she began, "I don't think your library is a good idea. You see, we've had a lot of problems with censorship here, and Mr. Phillips (the principal) is not likely to back you in this. It's not that I think it's a bad one, you understand; it's just that I don't want you to get in trouble."

I could sense Maggie's fury as her eyes began to fill with tears. Maggie has been well-taught. She has learned that censorship in any form, even self-censorship by teachers, is a way of limiting a student's right to read and learn. Maggie knows the difference between censorship and selection. She also saw her plans being destroyed bit by bit. Maggie was angry, afraid and hurt. I prepared myself for a confrontation.

In working with my student teachers my goal is to try to turn every situation into a positive learning one. I proceeded, feet first, "I can certainly understand what Ms. Ledbetter is saying, Maggie. (No lie there, I could; I didn't like it; I was furious, but I understood.) It's terrible to be in a situation in which you walk out on a limb and discover the limb won't support you (Yep, no doubt about the veracity of that comment!)."

But, even I wasn't prepared for what I'd say next. I wasn't prepared for how I'd respond when one set of principles was challenging another. My primary goal was to protect Maggie from potential disaster, to make her student teaching as successful as it could possibly be. I knew she could not win this battle; neither could I.

Ironically, I circumvented the issue by telling Ms. Ledbetter that I had just been appointed chair of a statewide Intellectual Freedom Committee. I told her that my hope was that we could make censorship less of a concern in her high school. I avoided the issue at hand. By default, I agreed to censorship.

I left knowing that I had compromised my own principles to save a student teacher from a confrontation and a possibly dangerous, damaging situation. But, my intent did not make me feel any better about what I had just witnessed, or the part I had played in it. I knew that Maggie could rightfully say that I taught my students one thing, but, when push came to shove, I did another.

The next afternoon I talked to Maggie in my office. I knew she was disappointed in me; she knew I was disappointed in myself. We talked about creative ways to solve the problem. We settled on an annotated bibliography of books to be sent home to parents two weeks before the unit. Along with this, a list of the books selected by their children for personal reading would be sent. Parents would be told of their right to check out the books from the teacher and preview them prior to the unit.

The compromise was received with relief by Ms. Ledbetter who agreed to check with the principal for final approval. Apparently, according to Maggie, Mr. Phillips agreed with some reluctance.

Today, Maggie feels pretty good about our decision; she is able to teach her unit without significantly altering her approach. Ms. Ledbetter plans to use the technique in future units of her own.

But, I am angry and frustrated with myself and my willingness to knuckle under. I believe the compromise was a good one, one which will allow the students the opportunity to select their own books. However, I know I have succumbed to the real or imagined attacks of real or imagined parents. I, like Ms. Ledbetter and Mr. Phillips, have acted out of fear, in this case, fear for what could happen to this student teacher. Censorship is an act of fear.

Not long after this incident, I chaired a phone conference meeting of the Intellectual Freedom committee. I felt slightly hypocritical as we spoke of overt cases of censorship and reviewed a recent report compiled by the "People for the American Way", on the increasing frequency of censorship cases in North Carolina. Then, we discussed my fear that the biggest enemy to intellectual freedom comes from within ourselves. We agreed that attempts to set up school-wide policies are not working. Censorship is rampant even in those schools with sophisticated policy statements and workable selection and review procedures. We agreed that public education is facing a crisis from without and within.

Since the demons from within are our fears, we decided to poll teachers (and, hopefully, school librarians) from across the state to determine the extent of their fear and how their fear is affecting what they teach and materials they use in their classrooms. If we recognize our own fears, perhaps we can begin to deal with them.

I detest all forms of censorship, including the one I did not confront in Maggie's classroom. But, I also recognize that what we (professional educators in professional organizations) have been doing to assist schools and teachers in dealing with the censorship issue is not working. All of the people I mentioned in this article are or will be superior educators. All of them make decisions based on what is "best" for their students. All of them recognize the damage that can be caused by continuous, disruptive confrontation . We need to offer a more creative approach for dealing with the issue of censorship before every teacher has to compromise principles so that s/he can continue to teach, before we have nothing left to teach.

The compromise I offered is one way to avoid the censorship issue; there are others. (See information about the film "Books Our Children Read" on page 68.) No, the problem has not been solved in Maggie's classroom or school. But, perhaps, if we can offer more creative compromises, students will continue to be able to read books and think thoughts that will allow them to grow into adults without unrational fears.

I wish I could have fought the fight instead of compromising. But, I guess, if I had to do it again, I would want to reach the same end. Maggie has successfully completed her student teaching. Ms. Ledbetter has a new technique for avoiding censorship. The students are selecting and reading a variety of books; no parents have complained. Mr. Phillips is working with parents and teachers on non-combative issues. And I, well, I have an unpleasant situation about which to write. It may make others think about creative, workable ways to avoid censorship.

Charlie Reed

* All names have been changed.

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